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CHINA DAILY

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RIGHT TRACK

Nation strives to safeguard supply chains

Xi stresses opposition to politicizing, weaponizing economic, trade relations

By **MA SI**
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China's recent emphasis on safeguarding global supply chains highlights the urgency and vital importance of deeper international cooperation in key fields, as the world struggles with disruptions in sectors such as semiconductors, energy and food, as well as other industrial chain challenges, experts said.

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Amid the global economic downturn and geopolitical uncertainties, China has made it clear that any attempts to sever supply chains will harm the world, and the country will continue to play an important and positive role in stabilizing global industrial chains, they added.

During his meetings with leaders of a number of countries on Indonesia's resort island of Bali earlier this month, President Xi Jinping called for more efforts to stabilize global industrial and supply chains. Among the leaders he met during the G20 Summit were US President Joe Biden, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

During their discussions, Xi said that starting a trade or technology war, building walls and barriers, and pushing for decoupling and severing supply chains all run counter to the principles of a market economy and undermine international trade rules.

He reiterated Beijing's opposition to politicizing and weaponizing economic and trade ties as well as exchanges in science and technology.

Bai Ming, deputy director of international market research at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said "The remarks send a strong message that the world is a community where all countries need to cooperate rather than decouple from one another. They show that China is a responsible country amid challenges."

The discussions bear particular importance, as they came after the US government imposed a series of well-calculated restrictions or controls on exports of advanced semiconductor technology to China. Washington is also pressuring other countries, such as South Korea, Japan and the Netherlands, which are major players in the global semiconductor sector, to adopt similar chip restrictions on China.

*See **Supply chains**, page 3*

Xi hails anniversary of normalized ties with DRC

By **CAO DESHENG**
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President Xi Jinping exchanged congratulations on Thursday with Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi on the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations, with both leaders vowing to promote the countries' strategic partnership.

In a congratulatory message to Tshisekedi, Xi said that over the past half century, China-DRC relations have developed in a sound and stable manner, and the traditional friendship has been continuously deepened.

In recent years, the two countries have established a strategic partnership of win-win cooperation and achieved fruitful results in pragmatic cooperation, which has greatly improved the well-being of their people, he added.

Noting that he attaches great importance to the development of bilateral relations, Xi said he stands ready to work with Tshisekedi to take the 50th anniversary as an opportunity to deepen political mutual trust, strengthen Belt and Road cooperation and jointly open up new prospects for China-DRC relations.

Tshisekedi once again extended warm congratulations on Xi's reelection as general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, saying that over the past 50 years, bilateral relations have achieved sustained and sound development.

He also said he is willing to deepen the traditional friendship between the two countries and push for new achievements in the strategic partnership between the DRC and China for the benefit of their people.

Banner day

Workers are busy preparing national flags at Qingdao Wonderfulflag company in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Wednesday. The company has been a flag supplier for the FIFA World Cup since 1998. LI ZIHENG / XINHUA **See more, pages 19, 20**

BOOM TIMES END FOR US TECH INDUSTRY

Tens of thousands of workers fired at large companies

By **AI HEPING** in New York
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indepth

The COVID-19 pandemic moved much of the world online and led to a boom, especially for high-tech companies in the United States over the past two years, but it couldn't last indefinitely.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos said in April: "Markets teach. The lessons can be painful."

Now, the firing of tens of thousands of workers at Big Tech companies just a year after Silicon Valley was at its peak is sending a new message: The bull market of the past decade — which created massive amounts of wealth for tech investors, workers and the broader economy — is over.

The pain is being felt by investors faced with lower stock prices, and thousands of employees losing their jobs as companies deal with slowing economic growth, higher costs, rising interest rates and high inflation.

Online advertisements are the chief source of income for countless tech companies, but as the economy ran into trouble, many of them slashed these budgets.

*See **Tech**, page 2*

Filling deliveries

A delivery worker picks up goods at a Beijing logistics station of online delivery platform Meituan on Wednesday. Online shopping has increased with the city's tightening of control measures as COVID-19 cases rise. TINGSHU WANG / REUTERS **See story, page 4**

Sino-US talks renew climate hopes

By **HOU LIQIANG**
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Soon after the meeting of the heads of state of China and the United States ahead of the recent G20 Summit, the two countries' special envoys on climate change held formal consultations on the sidelines of the COP27 United Nations climate change conference.

The consultations, which occurred more than three months after China suspended climate talks with the US to protest US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August, were seen by experts as a boon to the world's climate process, as the window to avoid catastrophic damage from global warming is closing fast.

The experts said they look forward to seeing exponential progress in the two sides' coming consultations. These are expected to continue after the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP27, which concluded on Nov 18, so that the two countries can help galvanize global efforts to cope with the climate crisis, as they did years ago.

While meeting with US President Joe Biden on Nov 14 in Bali, Indonesia, President Xi Jinping said it is in the two countries' interest to promote global recovery from the pandemic, tackle climate change and resolve regional issues through China-US coordination and cooperation.

Biden said the US is committed to keeping the channels of communication open between the two presidents and at all levels of government, in order to strengthen necessary cooperation and play a key role in addressing climate change, food security and other important global challenges.

> "We urge the world's two major economies to act with speed and conviction to meet the challenge of the moment."
>
> **Manish Bapna,** president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council

Following instructions from the heads of state, the special envoys of the two countries met in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, where COP27 was held, to discuss promoting the success of the UN climate gathering, said Xie Zhenhua, China's special envoy for climate change, on Saturday.

The conversations with the US were "very candid, friendly, positive, active and very constructive", he told reporters in Egypt. "Today, we decided through discussions that we will continue formal consultations after the UN conference concluded."

As one of its eight countermeasures in response to the visit of the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan on Aug 2, China decided to suspend climate talks with the US.

Under the administration of Barack Obama, China and US laid the foundations for international support for the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. As Obama's vice-president then, Biden witnessed the work done on the agreement. Now, as US president, he has made it clear that climate change will be an urgent priority for his administration.

The meeting between Xi and Biden has ignited a beacon of hope that China and the US will once again inject strong momentum into the global fight against climate change, experts said.

Manish Bapna, president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the meeting of Xi and Biden has sent an "unequivocal" signal from the two largest economies to work together to address the climate crisis.

Such a signal is "more than welcome", he said, "it's essential."

The world needs every country at the table, striving to deliver solutions that curtail the use of fossil fuels and sharply accelerate investment in clean energy, he said.

"The window to hold the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees (Celsius) and avoid the worst damage from climate change is closing fast," he said. "We urge the world's two major economies to act with speed and conviction to meet the challenge of the moment."

Ani Dasgupta, president and CEO of the World Resources Institute, said the global community is "breathing a sigh of relief" that Biden and Xi are restarting joint efforts to tackle climate change.

Coming back to the table is just the first step required for leadership on climate change from these two super economies, he said in a statement.

Tang Xinhua, an expert from the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said that the resumption of Sino-US climate talks is favorable for Biden's Democratic Party in the lead-up to the 2024 US presidential election.

"Biden has held aloft the banner of tackling climate change. If China even doesn't talk with the US on the issue, that is unfavorable for the Democratic Party," said Tang.

China unveils ambitious plan for lunar exploration

By **ZHAO LEI**
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China has made an ambitious road map for its future lunar exploration programs, including an international scientific outpost, according to the programs' chief planner.

Wu Weiren, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said that the next step in the country's lunar adventure — the Chang'e 6 robotic mission — has been set to land on the moon's far side and will collect and bring samples back.

"If Chang'e 6 succeeds, it will become the first time for man to get samples from the far side," he said in a recent meeting with domestic media in Beijing.

After Chang'e 6, the Chang'e 7 robotic probe will be sent to land on the moon's south pole to search for water and other resources.

"The Chang'e 7 mission is set to look for traces of water on the south pole, investigate the environment and weather there, and survey its landform.

*See **Lunar**, page 3*

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VISIT…

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PAGE TWO

Commuters pass Twitter's headquarters in San Francisco on Nov 18. The company has laid off some 3,000 employees.
TAYFUN COSKUN / ANADOLU AGENCY

TECH: INVESTORS FEELING THE PAIN

From page 1

After enjoying stunning growth in demand during the pandemic, many of technology's biggest players are dealing with a return to more normal demand, coupled with the impact of higher interest rates and the looming threat of recession.

Investors want their stock prices to rise and are pushing companies for higher productivity, to re-examine costs, focus on cost savings, cut high wages, eliminate cushy perks, get stock prices up and improve profits.

Kenneth Fong, founder and chairman of Kenson Ventures in Silicon Valley, California, said: "It (the layoffs) is not surprising. The reason is simple: the stock market was very high in 2021. In 2022, the value of those companies dropped significantly. The motive of Silicon Valley is to make a lot of money. Because the companies did so well last year, California has more than $90 billion in surplus funds this year, but the state might face a budget deficit of $25 billion next year. It's wholly due to the stock market. Because the stock market dropped so much, those high-tech companies had to lay people off."

More than 35,000 tech workers at 72 US companies have been laid off this month, adding to a total of 120,000 tech jobs lost this year, according to data compiled by layoffs.fyi, which has used public records to track tech layoffs since the pandemic started.

Semil Shah, a general partner at venture capital company Haystack, told The Washington Post there may be as many as 25,000 to 50,000 unemployed tech workers in the Bay Area job market over the next few months.

However, all the Big Tech layoffs this year do not amount to 0.1 percent of the total US workforce of 164 million, according to the Labor Department.

According to the department's latest report on jobless claims, the number of people registering as unemployed fell on a weekly basis by 4,000 in the second week of this month, to 222,000 claims.

A report by Goldman Sachs' chief economist Jan Hatzius said "tech layoffs are not a sign of an impending recession".

Even though tech companies reach billions of users, they only account for a small share of the entire US workforce. If all employees working in internet publishing, broadcasting and web searches were fired simultaneously, the unemployment rate would rise by less than 0.3 percent, according to Goldman Sachs.

While many tech companies have reduced their workforce, others are still hiring. The latest Jobs Report from the Computing Technology Industry Association shows that despite the layoffs, hiring by tech companies grew in October for the 23rd consecutive month, adding more than 20,000 positions.

Facebook parent MetaPlatforms fired 11,000 people this month — about 13 percent of its workforce.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg attributed the cuts to over-hiring during the pandemic. In a letter to staff members, he cited a decline in e-commerce, the wider economic downturn, increased competition, and a decline in ad sales — the primary way the company makes money.

Uncertain environment

Amazon has said that layoffs have begun at the company, but it didn't state the number of employees affected. The company attributed the job cuts to an "unusual and uncertain macroeconomic environment" forcing it to prioritize what matters most to customers.

The online retail and cloud computing giant plans to lay off some 10,000 employees in corporate and technology jobs, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal reported. The job cuts would focus on the company's devices organization, retail division and human resources.

As of this autumn, Amazon employed more than 1.5 million full- and part-time workers globally, many of them in warehouses.

According to The New York Times, the 10,000 expected layoffs would comprise about 3 percent of Amazon's corporate employees and a significantly smaller share of its overall workforce.

In Seattle, home to Amazon in Washington state, the layoffs have ended the tech sector's unstoppable momentum that many took for granted just a year ago.

Anneliese Vance-Sherman, an Employment Security Department regional economist who covers the jobs market in the Seattle area, told The Seattle Times, "It's not necessarily surprising that some of that demand has diminished and wasn't necessarily sustainable in the long run."

The cuts announced so far represent only a tiny fraction of the region's tech workforce. State data show more than 160,000 workers at companies in the Seattle area and more than 190,000 statewide work at companies focused on information technology.

Jacob Vigdor, an economist at the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy who follows state and local job markets, said that as of last year, Amazon had about 75,000 workers in the Seattle area, up from 53,500 in 2019.

"The most amazing thing about the Amazon layoff (report) is how small that number looks in relation to what has become the company's gargantuan size, and its rapid growth," he told the Seattle Times. Vigdor said that even if all 10,000 of Amazon's reported layoffs were confined to Washington state, "it would only be taking their local employment headcount back about a year or so".

Workers construct and test robots at Amazon's robotics innovation hub in Westborough, Massachusetts, on Nov 10. JOSEPH PREZIOSO / AFP

> It (the layoffs) is not surprising. The reason is simple: the stock market was very high in 2021. In 2022, the value of those companies dropped significantly ... those high-tech companies had to lay people off."
>
> **Kenneth Fong,** founder and chairman of Kenson Ventures in Silicon Valley, California

Megan Slabinski, who oversees regional hiring for technology, marketing and creative roles at the Seattle office of recruiter Robert Half, said the current layoffs have grabbed a lot of attention because they are at "companies that you traditionally associate as a bellwether of the tech industry — but the tech industry has expanded far beyond those tech giants".

MetaPlatforms took on more than 15,000 people in the first nine months of this year. It fired 11,000 earlier this month, about 13 percent of its staff members.

Some executives announcing cuts have said they miscalculated.

"I got this wrong, and I take responsibility for that," Zuckerberg wrote in a letter to staff members.

The layoffs come as Facebook has invested billions in the Metaverse — pitched as a virtual-reality future in which people will work, mingle, exercise and go to concerts. But this is an unproven bet on the future, and not everyone is convinced it should be the social media company's focus.

Connel Fullenkamp, an economics professor at Duke University, said many layoffs are being carried out by companies correcting the mistakes they made in transitioning out of the pandemic.

Shortly after closing his $44 billion purchase of Twitter late last month, the company's chief Elon Musk shed about 3,700 employees, according to internal communications viewed by CNBC. This is about half the workforce.

Musk said in a post on Nov 4 there was "no choice" but to lay off employees, adding that they were offered three months' severance.

He said the layoffs come as Twitter is losing more than $4 million per day. In the second quarter, the last time Twitter reported earnings, revenue fell by 1 percent from a year earlier.

Market resilience

Companies in other industries have said they will shed jobs. Warner Bros. Discovery Inc has trimmed its payroll, while Walt Disney Co said it will likely make layoffs.

While many large companies are cutting back, the overall US labor market continues to show resilience. Employers added 261,000 jobs last month, when the unemployment rate rose to 3.7 percent.

Companies that grew quickly at the start of the pandemic are now having to adapt to weaker revenue.

Paolo Pescatore, technology analyst at PP Foresight, said: "It's been a really disappointing quarter for earnings at many of the Big Tech companies. Nobody is immune."

Mike Morini, from WorkForce Software, which provides digital management tools, told the BBC a turning point appears to have been reached.

"The tech industry is exiting a period of growth at all costs. Technology companies that grew quickly during the past two years — when COVID-19 forced millions of people to spend more time working online, going to school and shopping — have faced a reckoning as revenue growth has slowed and people turn to pre-pandemic habits," he said.

Even Apple has signaled caution, with CEO Tim Cook saying the company is still hiring, but only on a "deliberate basis".

Apple spokeswoman Kelly Nantel said, "As part of our annual operating planning review process, we always look at each of our businesses and what we believe we should change.

"As we've gone through this, given the current macroeconomic environment (as well as several years of rapid hiring), some teams are making adjustments, which in some cases means certain roles are no longer necessary. We don't take these decisions lightly, and we are working to support any employees who may be affected," Nantel said.

In an open letter to Alphabet, the parent company of Google and YouTube, activist investor Christopher Hohn urged Alphabet to slash jobs and pay, according to the BBC. Alphabet had to be more disciplined about costs, Hohn wrote, and cut losses from projects such as its self-driving car company, Waymo.

Industry observer Scott Kessler told the BBC there is less tolerance for big spending on high-tech gambles such as virtual reality or driverless cars that may not pay off in the short term. "Some companies have had to face harsh realities," he said.

But while the Big Tech companies may be buffeted by economic headwinds, they aren't broken. Amazon's proposed 10,000 job cuts in corporate and technology roles represent only 3 percent of its office staff members.

The cuts may also be the start of new businesses as talented employees, dumped by the big companies, join or create startups. As veteran Silicon Valley observer Mike Malone recently told the BBC: "I won't write the Valley off yet. I still have a lot of hope."

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said that layoffs underway at the tech company, which will extend into next year, are the most difficult decision he has made since taking over from Bezos last year.

In a note to employees that was made public, Jassy said positions are being eliminated across Amazon's devices and books businesses.

Amazon executives have acknowledged that the devices unit has been targeted for cuts. The business, which is headlined by the Alexa voice-assistant brand, has lost more than $5 billion annually in recent years.

Dave Limp, Amazon's senior vice-president of devices and services, said in a message to employees that he made public on Wednesday that his team members who notified affected employees on Tuesday were working to help them find new jobs.

In some cases, those who don't find a new role at Amazon are set to receive severance of one week's pay for every six months worked, according to employees, with a maximum of 20 weeks' pay. Some employees in human resources have also been given the option of voluntarily leaving the company through buyout offers. Amazon didn't publicly provide details of severance packages.

From the end of 2019 to the end of last year, Amazon hired more than 800,000 employees, mostly at its hundreds of warehouses. Layoffs are rare at Amazon, which employs more than 1.5 million employees globally.

Jassy said Amazon continues to have growth opportunities in established and newer businesses, including advertising and Amazon Web Services, and in ventures such as healthcare and autonomous vehicles.

"Amazon has weathered uncertainty and difficult economies in the past and we will continue to do so," he said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Left: An exterior view of Twitter's headquarters in Piccadilly Circus, London, on Nov 5. DINENDRA HARIA / ANADOLU AGENCY **Center:** A group poses for a photo on the Meta campus at Menlo Park, California, last month. TERRY SCHMITT / UPI PHOTO VIA NEWSCOM **Right:** A walkway links departments at Twitter's headquarters in San Francisco. EPA/GEORGE NIKITIN

TOP NEWS

Lao leader Thongloun to visit China

Trip set to deepen political mutual trust, tap potential for practical cooperation

By MO JINGXI
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The top leader of Laos is set to visit China next week, in a trip that is expected to deepen political mutual trust and tap potential for practical cooperation between the two countries.

Thongloun Sisoulith, general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and president of Laos, will pay a state visit to China from Nov 29 to Dec 1, his first trip to the nation since taking up these posts earlier this year.

The three-day visit is at the invitation of Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, Hu Zhaoming, spokesman for the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, said on Thursday.

Zhang Jie, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' National Institute of International Strategy, said, "The visit, following a round of trips to China by foreign leaders since the conclusion of the 20th CPC National Congress, shows that the world is eager to strengthen its ties with China and learn about its plans for future development."

Through these visits to China, the world will be better informed on China's opening-up policy and will share the dividends of the country's development, she said.

As close neighbors and socialist countries, China and Laos have constantly deepened their trade and economic ties in recent years, with China being the second-largest trading partner of Laos and its largest provider of foreign direct investment. Last year, their bilateral trade reached $4.35 billion.

Zhang said that an in-person meeting between the leaders will enable the two nations to have more discussions on how to transform their political consensus into concrete actions to deepen cooperation in areas such as agriculture, infrastructure, digital economy and green development.

This will be the first such meeting between the top leaders of China and Laos since 2019, when Xi met in Beijing with Bounnhang Vorachith, who was then general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Lao president.

Dec 3 will mark the anniversary of the opening of the China-Laos Railway. The 1,035-kilometer rail line that runs from Kunming, Yunnan province, to Vientiane, the capital of Laos, is the largest project in the Southeast Asian nation completed under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

According to China State Railway Group, the China-Laos Railway had delivered more than 10 million metric tons of freight as of early November, helping to bring various kinds of commodities in and out of the landlocked country.

Zhang, from the CASS, said that given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, greater potential still remains to be realized from the China-Laos Railway.

"During Thongloun's visit, the two sides can further discuss how to better coordinate with each other in aspects such as customs clearance, logistics and quarantine inspection to make best use of the railway," she said.

In a congratulatory message sent to Xi on his reelection as general secretary of the CPC Central Committee in October, Thongloun expressed his willingness to work with Xi in jointly leading and promoting the building of a community with a shared future in order to bring more benefits to the two countries and their peoples.

US military contacts, sales of arms to Taiwan decried

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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Beijing is firmly opposed to military contacts between the United States and Taiwan as well as US arms sales to the island, a Defense Ministry spokesman said on Thursday, noting that any attempts to contain the Chinese mainland by arming Taiwan are doomed to fail.

On Nov 15, the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, which is under the US Congress, released its latest annual report.

It suggested assessing the ways to strengthen Taiwan's military capabilities and enhancing US deterrence capabilities with regard to Taiwan.

China firmly opposes US-Taiwan military ties and US arms sales to the island, said Senior Colonel Wu Qian, spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense.

Wu also urged the US to earnestly implement the commitments it made during the top leaders' talks in Indonesia and to abide by the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiques so as not to further undermine the common interests of both sides.

In the meeting between President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden in Indonesia, Biden said that the US does not support "Taiwan independence", "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan", and it has no intention of having a conflict with China.

On Tuesday, State Councilor and Defense Minister General Wei Fenghe also urged the US to keep its word and honor its commitments, truly implement the consensuses reached by the two presidents, and adopt a rational and pragmatic China policy, so as to remove the causes of crisis.

Wu also stressed that Taiwan is a "sacred and inalienable part" of Chinese territory.

"Any move to strengthen US-Taiwan military contacts is a wrong act that interferes in China's internal affairs and violates US' commitments," he said. "Any attempt to contain the Chinese mainland by arming Taiwan is nothing but an unrealistic dream, and it is doomed to be on a collision course with a great wall of steel forged by the People's Liberation Army."

The spokesman also responded to a video showing an exchange by radio telephone between the Chinese guided-missile destroyer CNS *Xiamen* and a Taiwan warship when they met near the island.

In the video, which has been widely circulated on Chinese social media, the officer on the destroyer told the Taiwan warship that there was no "24 nautical mile line".

Wu said any "line" unilaterally drawn by Taiwan is illegal and invalid, and it cannot change the fact that Taiwan belongs to China or prevent the PLA from safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He warned Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party authorities that the PLA will fight decisively if anyone dares to separate Taiwan from China.

What a character

A child waves to a cartoon character at the China International Cartoon and Animation Festival in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Thursday. The festival opened on Thursday and continues through Sunday. LONG WEI /FOR CHINA DAILY

Nestlings nurtured

A forestry bureau employee releases an Oriental white stork at a wetland in Tianjin on Wednesday. Three nestlings of the endangered species, under State protection in China, were rescued in April. The birds have developed flight feathers after months of care and were ready to be released back into the wild.
ZHAO ZISHUO / XINHUA

Supply chains: Pain of disruptions felt

From page 1

"Direct communication with leaders of the countries concerned can clarify the strategic intentions, and clearly express the message that any attempts to exclude China from industrial chains will impede global economic recovery," said Zhang Tengjun, deputy director of the China Institute of International Studies' Department for Asia-Pacific Studies.

According to Zhang, that is in line with the outlook of many Asian countries. "During the meeting with his South Korean counterpart, President Xi stressed the need to deepen cooperation in areas such as high-tech manufacturing. The two economies are highly complementary and there is no conflict of fundamental interests between the two sides," Zhang added.

The Netherlands has also displayed its intention to resist US calls to ban chip equipment sales to China. On Tuesday, Dutch Foreign Trade Minister Liesje Schreinemacher told lawmakers that the Netherlands will make its own decision regarding Dutch company ASML's chip gear sales to China amid trade rule talks with the US and other allies, Bloomberg reported.

ASML dominates the market for one-of-a-kind, cutting-edge chipmaking equipment, such as ultraviolet lithography machines, that has become a focus of the US government's attempts to limit trade with China.

> "Any attempts to exclude China from industrial chains will impede global economic recovery."
>
> **Zhang Tengjun,** deputy director of the China Institute of International Studies' Department for Asia-Pacific Studies

"If we put that in an EU basket and negotiate with the US and in the end, it turns out (that) we give away deep ultraviolet lithography machines to the US, (and) we are worse off," Schreinemacher said.

Wang Yiming, vice-chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, said that in the past two years, countries have deeply felt the pain of disruptions in industrial chains, with chip shortage, poor logistics, as well as food and energy crises affecting enterprises and consumers globally.

"Amid such a context, it is particularly urgent to maintain the stability of global supply chains," Wang said, adding that some countries' attempts to politicize normal business ties will harm their own interests.

A case in point is that staff at the UK's largest microchip factory have urged British Business Secretary Grant Shapps to reverse his decision to force its Chinese owners to sell their majority stake.

The staff association at Newport Wafer Fab sent a letter to Shapps on Monday to argue that their livelihoods had been placed at risk after he ordered last week that Nexperia, which is owned by Chinese company Wingtech, must sell at least 86 percent of its stake in the plant due to alleged national security concerns, Sky News reported.

Despite such disruptions and headwinds, China has been working hard to maintain the resilience and stability of its supply chains, experts said.

Denis Depoux, global managing director of consultancy Roland Berger, said China's supply chains have improved, as Chinese and foreign companies invested heavily to modernize their production systems in 2021, when most of the global manufacturing sector was still badly hit by disruptions related to COVID-19.

"The continuous surge in Chinese exports, even in 2022 so far, demonstrates this resilience and competitiveness," he said.

Lunar: Global collaboration on exploration expected

From page 1

"The probe will carry a 'flyby craft' tasked with flying into pits on the lunar surface to look for ice," said Wu, the academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

"It will also be tasked with detecting the natural resources beneath the south pole's surface. Moreover, mission planners are considering whether we can use the probe to dig into the surface to check the underground structures and composition."

According to Wu, Chang'e 8 is set to land near Chang'e 7 on the south pole of the moon, and after that, the two missions' components — orbiters, landers, rovers and detectors — will work together to form a prototype of a robotic scientific outpost.

In the long run, the outpost will be a platform for international collaboration on lunar exploration, Wu said.

"We welcome foreign nations to join this project, and we can work together to design, build and manage this facility and share its data and findings," he said.

Pang Zhihao, a retired researcher at the China Academy of Space Technology and a renowned writer on space science, explained the reasons for choosing the moon's south pole as the outpost's site.

"Previous missions have found traces of water ice on the lunar poles. The next (Chang'e) missions can further investigate the existence of water, which can be used to support manned scientific expeditions to those regions in the future," he said. "The south pole is also characterized by its long period of sunlight, which can sustain extended operations."

China opened its lunar program in 2004 and has launched five robotic probes since 2007. The fourth one, Chang'e 4, landed on the far side of the moon in January 2019, becoming the first spacecraft to closely observe the little-known lunar region. The mission's core component — the Yutu 2 rover — has worked on the moon for nearly four years and has traveled more than 1,300 meters on lunar soil, making it the longest-working rover of all time.

The most recent mission, Chang'e 5, landed on the moon in December 2020 and soon brought 1,731 grams of lunar rocks and soil back to Earth, achieving a historic accomplishment about 44 years after the last lunar samples were brought back by the Soviet Union's "Luna 24" mission in 1976.

Country makes full payment of its dues to the UN

By MINLU ZHANG
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China paid the assessments for 11 United Nations peacekeeping operations for the 2022/23 fiscal year in full on Wednesday, the Chinese Mission to the United Nations said.

Prior to the payment, China had also paid in full assessments of its contributions to the UN regular budget and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, according to the mission.

As the second-largest contributor to the UN regular budget and peacekeeping assessments as well as a permanent member of the Security Council and the largest developing country, China has always actively fulfilled its financial obligations to the UN.

That shows China's steadfast support for the work of the UN and multilateralism, and demonstrates its sense of responsibility as a major country, the mission said.

$438 million
The amount of assessments China paid to the United Nations this year

China became the second-largest contributor to the UN's regular budget in 2019, contributing $367.9 million, or 12 percent of the total. The amount increased to $438 million this year. China is also the second-largest contributor to the assessments of UN peacekeeping operations, paying 15 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget.

Supporting multilateralism is a broad consensus of the international community, the mission said in a statement. Strengthening the role of the UN meets the general expectations of member states. "China has always been a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, a defender of international order and a provider of public goods," the mission said.

The Communist Party of China successfully held in October the 20th CPC National Congress, which outlined important strategic plans for China's future development. It reaffirmed that China always promotes and practices true multilateralism, remains actively engaged in the reform and construction of the global governance system, and firmly upholds the UN-centered international system, the international order underpinned by international law and the UN's central role in international affairs, the mission said.

UN peacekeeping operations play a vital role in eliminating the root causes of conflicts, maintaining the stability of countries involved and helping to achieve lasting peace.

The mission said that China has always promoted resolving hot spot issues through political means and is an active participant and important contributor to UN peacekeeping operations.

Currently, China has more than 2,200 troops serving in UN peacekeeping missions, making it the largest contributor of troops among the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

China supports the UN in strengthening its peacekeeping capacity and promoting the safety and security of peacekeepers. The country also appeals to the international community to increase investment and take action in this regard.

The mission said China also calls for continuous improvement of the UN's financial situation and strengthening of budget management and supports the UN in playing a greater role in addressing global challenges.

The country hopes that other member states, especially major contributors, pay their assessments in full and on time, so as to set examples and support the UN in playing its core role.

CHINA

Couriers struggle to work amid lockdowns

By **CHEN MEILING**
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Some delivery drivers in Beijing are struggling to find places to stay after being locked out of their communities due to the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19.

One such courier, Yang Dongxu, 29, from Haidian district in the capital, posted about his experience online on Tuesday night.

Yang said that after the community he lives in was locked down on Sunday, he had nowhere to go. He and 14 of his colleagues were forced to roam the streets for three days because they could not afford to pay for hotel rooms.

"We don't want to be locked down because we don't want to lose the only source of income we have," Yang wrote in his post, adding he didn't know when the restrictions in his community would be lifted.

Over the past few days, he and his fellow couriers, who are a lifeline to those locked down in the capital, have had to resort to sleeping on sofas or chairs in empty office buildings and underground commercial centers at night, often without heating. Security guards would regularly shoo them away, Yang said.

He is only able to pay around 50 yuan ($7) per night for accommodation as he doesn't earn a lot, Yang said, but such places are a rarity in the capital.

His post quickly gained momentum on social media, attracting the attention of many netizens sympathetic to the situation he and others have found themselves in.

Upon learning of the couriers' struggles, the on-demand services platform Meituan, whom the couriers work for, contacted them several hours later and arranged hotel rooms for eight of them on Tuesday night. The company said it would cover the costs.

The remainder have since found places to stay. Meituan has also promised to help them find new rental accommodation later, according to Yang.

Meituan released a statement saying that its couriers in similar situations can call for help, too.

As prevention and control measures against COVID-19 are ramped up in Beijing, demand for online deliveries has spiked, resulting in overworked couriers and long waiting times.

Yang said he deals with about 70 orders every day, compared with around 50 orders in normal times, and to complete his orders he's had to work until midnight in recent days.

Another Meituan courier who asked to remain anonymous, said, "packages piled up like a mountain" at his work station and it often takes a long time for him to find the right package he needs to deliver.

The courier has been regularly working 14 hours a day, from 9 am to 11 pm. He delivered about 70 packages on Wednesday, each earning him 5 yuan. He said his home was also locked down, so he has stayed in a hotel recently, which costs about 200 yuan a night. "Many of us want to quit the job," he added.

An SF Express courier surnamed Wang, who is also staying in a hotel due to community lockdown, said the company had promised to reimburse 50 percent of his accommodation costs.

> "We don't want to be locked down because we don't want to lose the only source of income we have."
>
> **Yang Dongxu,** delivery driver in Beijing's Haidian district

According to a report in Beijing News, Meituan has increased its number of couriers by 20 percent in the capital to meet the surging demand. To avoid infection, its couriers must get tested and report their health conditions every day.

Online grocery platform Dingdong Maicai has employed an extra 200 new couriers since the start of the latest outbreak in Beijing. It is also arranging for over 100 couriers to come from other cities to ease the pressure. The company suggested that people reduce the frequency of their orders and instead buy all the goods they need at one time.

Alibaba-owned supermarket Hema Fresh, or Freshippo, is working with restaurants that have suspended dine-in services to hire their workers temporarily to deliver food. It said workers from other industries are also welcome to take part.

Yang Beibei, deputy head of Chaoyang, the hardest-hit district in Beijing, said at a news conference on Thursday that the supply of living necessities is sufficient and stable, so there is no need for people to stockpile. In high-risk areas, the government will prepare vegetables for residents, she said, adding that the "white list" of deliverymen will be expanded to strengthen transport capacity on the basis of epidemic prevention.

Wang Songsong contributed to this story.

People shop for groceries at a market in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on Thursday. The city is imposing a five-day travel restriction on urban residents starting Friday. HUANG YUYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

COVID cases continue to rise across capital

Guangzhou arranging trips home for people stranded in high-risk areas

By **QIU QUANLIN** in Guangzhou, **TAN YINGZI** in Chongqing and **ZHANG YU**

Beijing will further reduce people's mobility in virus-prevalent areas as the city is still at a critical stage in coping with the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, senior officials said at a news conference on Thursday.

The number of new infections in the city has continued to rise with high speed and wide range, Liu Xiaofeng, deputy director of the Beijing Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said at the conference.

Between midnight and 3 pm on Thursday, Beijing reported 863 local infections, with 159 detected at the community level.

Those in virus-prevalent locations should further lower mobility by reducing cross-district travel and working and schooling online, he said.

According to Liu, the travel histories of infected people in recent days have involved crowded places like colleges, construction sites and markets. "Such places should enhance management for people's entrance and exit, with testing temperatures and checking nucleic acid results a must," Liu said.

Meanwhile, authorities will quickly reopen supermarkets that had been visited by infected people after disinfection, and these places should mostly reopen after shutting for just one day, the conference was told.

The Chinese mainland on Wednesday reported 3,927 locally transmitted confirmed COVID-19 cases and 27,517 local asymptomatic carriers, the National Health Commission said on Thursday.

In Guangzhou, Guangdong province, the government is organizing return trips for people who are stranded in high-risk areas and are willing to leave for home, according to a local health official.

"We will formulate an optimized plan for transferring people by fully understanding their needs, based on building epidemic-free communities," said Zhang Yi, deputy director and spokeswoman of the Guangzhou Health Commission.

People who live in buildings that have had no cases in more than three days can register their will to leave through door-to-door visits by community workers, said Fu Xiaochu, deputy head of the hard-hit Haizhu district. Those registered may go into a three-day centralized medical observation, and can then leave for home if everything is clear.

He added that some 913 people living in the district's high-risk areas had been transferred to their home destinations in this manner, and another 1,414 people were in the process of medical observation before departure.

Guangzhou reported 428 new locally transmitted confirmed cases and 7,192 asymptomatic carriers on Wednesday, of which 50 were found at the community level.

In Chongqing, the local government reiterated to the public the importance of reducing movement, municipal officials said at a news conference on Thursday evening.

On Wednesday, the city reported 7,548 new confirmed local infections, Vice-Mayor Dan Yanzheng said at the conference. In urban districts, infections via community transmission totaled 7.2 percent of the cases.

"Infections via community transmission continues to fall, which means our strategy has achieved some progress," Dan said.

"Our analysis shows that the number of new infections has reached a peak in recent days and the momentum of virus spread has been curbed," said Qiu Jingfu, director of the School of Public Health and Management at Chongqing Medical University.

"Everyone needs to work together to achieve the final victory and it is very, very important to limit movement."

Du Juan contributed to this story.
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Airlines optimistic about intl travel routes

By **LUO WANGSHU**
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More international flights are expected to return as travel curbs and COVID-19 prevention protocols are adjusted, China's three major airlines said.

From Oct 30 to March 25, Air China will offer 52 international routes, while China Southern Airlines and China Eastern Airlines will each offer 42.

Air China, the country's flag carrier, will operate 132 international flights every week, resuming air routes such as Beijing-Singapore, Hangzhou-Rome and Chongqing-Dubai.

The company also plans to provide new international air routes including Beijing-Johannesburg-Chengdu, Chongqing-Budapest and Chongqing-Ho Chi Minh City.

Although COVID-19 outbreaks are still affecting the passenger market in various regions, tailored prevention measures have reduced the negative effects on travel and resulted in an increasing number of passengers adapting to travel under epidemic prevention protocols, said Huang Bin from Air China's senior management team.

As epidemic control policies continue to be optimized, more people will be willing to travel by air, and market confidence is recovering, he added.

Chen Weihua, chief legal counsel at China Southern Airlines, said more new international air routes have been added from Guangzhou to Europe and Southeast Asia. The next step is to continue to add more routes from Guangzhou to North America.

Li Yangmin, general manager of China Eastern Airlines, said the recently upgraded epidemic prevention measures are good news for the resumption of the civil aviation sector.

"The cancellation of the 'circuit breaker' mechanism will bring direct economic benefits to companies. The simpler inspection, optimized epidemic control standard and shortened quarantine time will reduce the uncertainty of travel, boosting the sector's resumption," he said.

This month, China rolled out 20 measures to upgrade epidemic control, including the cancellation of the "circuit breaker" policy — the suspension of carriers for two weeks if five or more passengers tested positive upon landing in China, or four weeks if 10 or more passengers tested positive.

Inbound travelers also go through a shorter quarantine and simpler inspection.

The measures reduce COVID-19 quarantines for incoming travelers and close contacts from 10 to eight days, and inbound travelers will be asked to provide one negative test result instead of two from nucleic acid testing conducted no more than 48 hours before boarding.

According to the Civil Aviation Administration of China, more international flights will be arranged during the period, with 840 inbound and outbound flights per week, more than double the same period last year.

Shanghai Disney to resume operations

By **LIN SHUJUAN** in Shanghai
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Shanghai Disneyland's announcement that it would resume full operation on Friday has boosted tourism in the city, demonstrated by a hike in online searches of Shanghai as a travel destination, according to a leading online travel operator.

On Thursday, Shanghai Disneyland, which was closed on Oct 31 following a COVID-19 case, announced on its WeChat account that the theme park will be open from 8:30 am to 8:30 pm starting on Friday. Meanwhile, the Toy Story Hotel will also resume operations. Disneytown, Wishing Star Park and the Shanghai Disneyland Hotel resumed operations on Nov 17.

According to the announcement, select attractions, live entertainment venues, restaurants and retail locations may be unavailable or operating at reduced capacity due to limits on visitor numbers and enhanced health and safety measures.

When entering the theme park, guests will be required to undergo a temperature check and present a green health code and a 48-hour negative nucleic acid test result.

During their visit, guests should strictly follow COVID-19 control measures, which include wearing masks, practicing social distancing and scanning venue codes.

All guests entering other areas of Shanghai Disney Resort will be required to present a 72-hour negative nucleic acid test result.

But the stringent control measures haven't seemed to deter visitors.

Shanghai-based Ctrip.com, one of the country's leading online travel services, said the real-time page views for Disney soared fivefold after news of the reopening was released. Meanwhile, it made "Shanghai" a trending topic, enjoying a more than 30 percent increase in its search rate.

Data from the travel operator also showed that the hashtag "Shanghai Disney" has soared 130 percent in page view volume month-on-month since Nov 17 when the resort partially reopened, while tourism bookings to Shanghai have seen a relative month-on-month double-digit increase in the past week.

Little gems

Merchants check umbrellas at the China Yiwu International Commodities (Standards) Fair in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, on Thursday, as the fair opened. Organizers invited 300 major exhibitors to promote their newest small commodities. GONG XIANMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

FROM THE FRONT LINE | HEBEI

Spirit of the magpie spreads message from congress

By **ZHANG YU** in Shijiazhuang
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In Chinese culture, the magpie is considered a messenger of good luck and is known as *xique*, or bird of joy.

In Xingtai city, North China's Hebei province, there are groups of people who want to be like magpies and share their thoughts on the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China which was held in October.

In the early morning of Nov 15, a group of performers played Nanlu Sixian, a form of traditional Chinese opera, at Chengdong Park in Pingxiang county of Xingtai. Parks are usually places where residents go to exercise in the morning, especially seniors.

"The opera is popular with residents in the county because it is attractive and can radiate an infectious enthusiasm," said An Chunling, a member of the group.

An, 56, is the head of the county's cultural center.

She composed a piece of opera based on the content of a report delivered at the congress by writing the report's core concepts about rural vitalization into opera lyrics.

According to An, the kind of opera originated in Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage last year.

"The opera is lively and has helped me better understand the report," said villager Dong Bingkun from the county's Dongjiazhuang village. After watching a performance, he said he has gained great energy and confidence for the future.

"I'm glad they like it, and very happy to be like a magpie," An said.

Headed by An, the group's 22 members have gone to quite a few places across the county to give the performance, not only opera but also some other art forms such as songs and acrobatics.

Since the congress concluded last month, more than 220 artist groups in Xingtai have been dedicated to spreading the spirit of the congress and detailing the country's journey.

Their audiences are residents across the city, and they have performed thousands of times with diverse methods.

Among the group are seniors as well as young people from different occupations, including teachers and dancers.

"I will create more pieces of work to spread our Party's policies and plans so that villagers can comprehend correctly and deeply, which will guide their work and life in the future," she said, adding that this is also a good opportunity to revitalize the traditional opera.

CHINA

Farmyard fun

Children take part in a straw-carrying race at a kindergarten in Yuping Dong autonomous county in Guizhou province on Wednesday. The school held a farming sports meet for children to enjoy farming and harvest culture.
HU PANXUE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Achievements made in reducing air pollution

By HOU LIQIANG
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56 percent
Drop in the density of PM2.5 across China in the past 10 years

China has managed to realize a win-win between socioeconomic development and environmental protection in its action to enhance air pollution control since 2013, said Li Haisheng, president of the Chinese Academy of Environmental Sciences.

Li made the remark on Thursday during an annual meeting of the heads of national environmental science institutions from China, Japan and South Korea, which was held virtually this year.

Since 2013, when China launched a national campaign to beef up air pollution control, "regions across the country have all experienced remarkable improvement in air quality", he said.

The 74 major cities that started to monitor PM2.5 (particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less), saw the density of the pollutant drop by 56 percent in the past 10 years, he continued.

The significant improvement happened as the country's GDP sustained consistent, fast growth, he said, adding this is a result of the country's endeavor to accelerate green transition.

Great efforts, for example, have been made in China to optimize the industrial structure. Since 2013, China has phased out production capacity in the steel industry by 300 million metric tons and in the cement industry by 400 million tons, he noted.

"The country has comprehensively introduced extra-low emission standards in all key industries, and has established the world's largest clean coal-fired power supply system," he said.

He said two-thirds of the increase in the country's energy consumption in the past 10 years was met by renewable energy.

Li also highlighted the significant contributions from scientific research to the air quality improvement, especially the research conducted under the banner of the National Joint Research Center for Tackling Key Problems in Air Pollution Control, which was launched in 2017.

About 2,900 researchers from 295 research institutions across the country have participated in the work of the center, which aims to eradicate heavy air pollution events in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei province cluster, said Li, who is also head of the center.

The center has established an integrated ground-air-space monitoring and observation network, he noted, to help analyze the roles of emissions, meteorological conditions, chemical reactions and the cross-regional transportation of air pollutants in heavy air pollution events, and thus figure out the causes and sources of such events.

The work has helped control the key pollutants of PM2.5 in winter and ozone in summer, he said. Coal-fired power generation, steel, construction material and diesel-powered trucks, as well as scattered, small-scale coal consumption, have been listed as key areas for air pollution control.

The team has worked out detailed lists of emission sources and tailored, differentiated solutions to address air pollution for each of the 28 major cities, he continued.

Research shows that the concentration of PM2.5 in the region decreased by over 30 percent from 2018 to 2020, he said. These efforts have simultaneously helped reduce carbon dioxide emissions by roughly 200 million tons.

A 16-megawatt wind turbine for power generation at sea is rolled off a production line at an industrial park in Fuqing, Fujian province, on Wednesday. LIN SHANCHUAN / XINHUA

Overseas experiences brought back to China

By ZOU SHUO
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Around 80 percent of Chinese students who have studied abroad in the past three years have pursued postgraduate studies, according to a new report.

Released by overseas study consultancy EIC Education, the report, based on client surveys, said that in the past three years, 92 percent of students going to Hong Kong and the United Kingdom for study were postgraduate students, followed by Singapore with 84 percent and Australia with 78 percent.

Business and economics were the most favored disciplines this year, studied by 33 percent of all students, while engineering (23 percent) and social studies (21 percent) ranked second and third.

Increasing employment competitiveness is the biggest reason for Chinese students to go abroad for postgraduate studies, with other reasons including broadening horizons and improving language skills.

The report found that only 7 percent of students chose to work overseas and apply for citizenship after graduation this year, while 25 percent said they would return to China immediately. Another 25 percent said they would return after working abroad for some time and 27 percent said they were still undecided.

According to the Ministry of Education, more than 80 percent of overseas Chinese students have returned to the mainland to work after graduation in the past decade.

Jiang Lige, 25, graduated from Queen Mary University of London in the UK with a master's degree in corporate finance in September.

The main reason for her to go abroad for postgraduate studies was that it was too difficult and very competitive to enroll in good Chinese universities for postgraduate studies for finance majors, she said.

She also likes the UK and wanted to experience different cultures and the learning environment in other countries. However, Jiang never considered working abroad and returned to work at a financial company in Beijing.

The overseas study experience and fluency in English helped her land the job, she said.

Li Muzi, 24, is a first-year postgraduate student at Northeastern University in the United States, majoring in project management.

He said he chose to study abroad to see the bigger world and become more independent. The main attraction for him was the sports culture at US universities as he plays football often.

Although studying abroad has become less cost-effective as it is very hard to earn back the tuition and other fees, one cannot measure it purely via monetary gains, he said.

Influential scientists on mainland growing

Nation's academic prowess rises for 5th straight year, according to report

By ZHANG ZHIHAO
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The number of highly influential scientists on the Chinese mainland has increased for a fifth consecutive year, signaling the nation's rising academic influence, according to an annual report by the global analytical firm Clarivate Analytics.

Experts said the trend shows that China is steadily catching up with the United States regarding high-level scholarly contributions, but the gap between the countries remains substantial, particularly in fields related to life and medical sciences.

On Nov 15, Clarivate revealed its 2022 list of highly cited researchers and academics who have demonstrated a "disproportionate level of significant and broad influence" in their fields. This year's list featured 6,938 scientists from 69 countries and regions, spread across 21 research fields from engineering to social sciences.

These scientists had produced papers that ranked in the top 1 percent by the number of citations from 2011 to last year, a prestigious percentile typically reserved for groundbreaking or trendsetting discoveries. Academic citation is a widely used indicator of the cited paper's influence and utility.

The US was home to 2,764 world-class scientists this year, accounting for 38.3 percent of the list. Although the US leads the world in research influence, its share of the entire list has decreased from 43.3 percent in 2018.

The Chinese mainland ranked second this year with 1,169 highly cited researchers. In five years, the Chinese mainland has more than doubled its share of the list, rising from 7.9 percent in 2018 to 16.2 percent this year.

"Research fuels the race for knowledge. While the United States continues to lead the world in research influence, China continues to close the gap," said David Pendlebury, head of research analysis at the Institute for Scientific Information at Clarivate.

"Indeed, the 2022 list reflects a transformational rebalancing of scientific and scholarly contributions at the top level through the globalization of the research enterprise," he said in the report.

As for research institutions, Harvard University still boasted the highest concentration of these top scientists, with 233 scholars. The Chinese Academy of Sciences came in at a close second with 228, though analysts said the academy would likely surpass Harvard soon, given its massive size and resources.

In addition, China's Tsinghua University has steadily climbed up the global ranking, moving from ninth place in 2020 to fifth place this year with 73 noted researchers. The mainland's second-highest-ranking institution is Hunan University, with 32 scientists, followed by Peking University with 31 and Zhejiang University with 28.

Li Zhiming, president of the Committee of Talent Development of the Chinese Society of Educational Development Strategy, said several lists try to evaluate the scholarly impact of renowned scientists, and the list by Clarivate is relatively more recognized within academia.

"These lists are not for ranking scholars, and they serve as indicators to show the status of the current research landscape and document the long-term performance of scientists," he said in a recent article. "To be included in the list means that scientist commands strong global influence in their particular fields."

A scientist based in Hunan province who was on Clarivate's list this year and requested anonymity, said the list also evaluates how active these noted scientists are in their current research.

"To be on the list is certainly an honor, but as a scientist, I am more interested in seeing what my colleagues are doing and what research direction my field is going," the expert said.

Basic research that can serve the United Nations' sustainable development goals is a significant development trend for the international scientific community in recent years, he added.

"China's growing policy and financial support for scientific and technological research, especially in basic sciences and cross-field studies, is the key reason it is producing a growing number of world-class scholars," the scientist said.

Monkeypox vaccines in development

By WANG XIAOYU
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Chinese drugmaker Sinopharm said on Wednesday that it is developing three potential mRNA vaccines for monkeypox.

The experimental vaccines have been shown in a study to significantly evoke specific antibodies against monkeypox in mice, the company said in a statement.

Compared with attenuated virus vaccines, which are currently available, the new vaccines are believed to be safer and capable of inducing neutralizing antibodies that can prevent infection more quickly, it said.

The research is being led by Yang Xiaoming, chairman of China National Biotech Group, a unit administered by Sinopharm. Research results were published on bioRxiv, a preprint platform on Tuesday.

"The release of these data has filled a gap in monkeypox-specific vaccines based on mRNA technology and helps prepare for the possible spread of monkeypox virus," Sinopharm said.

The company made a key step in vaccine development in late October when it announced having successfully isolated monkeypox virus strains from clinical samples of infected patients.

However, developing new vaccines typically requires years of research and clinical trials before reaching the public.

Animal studies and three phases of human trials are some of the prerequisites for gaining market approval in China.

The mRNA technology behind the vaccine candidates contains genetic instructions for cells to make viral proteins that prime the immune system.

Messenger RNA vaccines attracted considerable interest since the COVID-19 pandemic for their high efficacy and safety despite being a relatively novel tool.

China is also developing homegrown COVID-19 vaccines using mRNA technology, but no injections have gained approval so far.

Because monkeypox and smallpox viruses are highly similar in genome makeup and their antibodies have shown significant cross-protection, it is widely believed that smallpox vaccines can provide some immunity against monkeypox.

Currently, there are three smallpox vaccines available worldwide. One of them, called Jynneos, was approved for monkeypox around 2019 and is being widely deployed to battle monkeypox outbreaks in some regions.

The World Health Organization declared monkeypox a global health emergency on July 23 after a large number of nonendemic countries, including the United States and some in Europe, experienced surging cases from early May.

The mainland reported its first imported monkeypox case on Sept 16 in an incoming passenger arriving in Chongqing in Southwest China.

No other infections have been registered thus far.

Former cyberspace official jailed for bribery

By CAO YIN
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Peng Bo, a former senior official at the Cyberspace Administration of China, was sentenced to 14 years in prison by a court in Jiangsu province on Thursday for taking bribes of more than 54 million yuan ($7.6 million).

At the same time, Peng, also former deputy head of a central office for preventing and handling cult-related issues, was fined 5 million yuan, according to the ruling announced by the Wuxi Intermediate People's Court in Jiangsu.

His illicit gains and interest obtained from bribery have been seized and turned over to the national treasury, it said.

From 2006 to 2018, Peng made use of his various positions in the Cyberspace Administration of China and the post of deputy head of the Office of the Central Leading Group on the Prevention and Handling of Cult-related Issues, to help others facilitate the settlement of litigation, expand internet businesses and deal with land transfer procedures. In return, he received over 54.6 million yuan, either directly or via his relatives, from those he aided, it added.

The court said that Peng's behavior constituted the crime of bribery, identifying the amount of money involved in the case as "extremely large".

"But given Peng confessed to the crime, voluntarily shared many facts unknown to investigators and returned all the bribes, we punished him leniently," the court added.

Peng said that he accepted the ruling and will not appeal to a higher court.

Peng, 65, a native of Hunan province and a graduate of Peking University, started his career as a teacher in 1974. Six years later, he joined the Communist Party of China.

Before he came to the cyberspace administration in 2012, he had worked for a few Chinese news outlets for several years.

He was placed under investigation for suspected serious violations of discipline and law in March last year and was expelled from the Party.

Seven months later, he was charged by prosecutors in Wuxi with taking bribes to control negative information about others on the internet by taking advantage of his positions.

His case was publicly heard by the court at the end of last year.

CHINA

Nitinun Chomchuen (left) introduces the Luban Workshop program to visitors during the first World Vocational and Technical Education Development Conference, which was held in Tianjin in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Thai teacher aids Tianjin students

Language expert brings her skills to learners in the northern port city

By **YANG CHENG** in Tianjin
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Nitinun Chomchuen, a teacher from Thailand working at the Tianjin Bohai Vocational Technical College, said she is a typical example of China-Thailand kinship.

The 35-year-old from Nonthaburi has a beautiful Chinese name — *Keying* ("Shining") — and graduated from Silpakorn University with a degree in Chinese.

"I have had a passion for Chinese culture since I was a child and was determined to study Chinese at senior school," she said.

She did a three-year MBA at Tianjin University on a Chinese government scholarship from 2013 to 2016.

After graduating, she began work at the vocational college as a Chinese language teacher for Thai students under the Luban Workshop program, a technological and vocational training program organized in partnership with Ayutthaya Technical College in Thailand and the first of its kind among the 25 Luban Workshops currently offered around the world.

She has also been engaged in foreign liaison and interpretation work thanks to her excellent Chinese, and in addition to giving Chinese language lessons to Thai students, she also helps with China-Thailand short-term faculty and student exchange programs, as well as long-term overseas student training.

To date, some 100 Thai students have learned basic Chinese with her, which has been helpful to their participation in the program.

Chomchuen's work is appreciated by both her Chinese and Thai colleagues.

While working at the college, she met her Chinese husband, Sun Jianpeng, who is a teacher with the engineering, practice and innovation project, or EPIP, a training model that is part of the Luban Workshop.

Chomchuen said graduates of the Luban Workshop can easily find employment in the saturated job market in Thailand, and that the program has attracted students from other ASEAN countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia.

"We offer four majors which are preferred by Thai students: Mechatronics; the Internet of Things; New Energy Automobiles; and Computer Numeral Control Technology," she said.

Thanyarut Plaisuntea, who graduated from the 2017 Luban Workshop program at the Tianjin Bohai Vocational Technical College, won the Prince Sirindhorn Award at the first "Chinese plus Vocational and Technological Gem Cup" Thai Vocational Education Competition.

"The Luban Workshop has had an active influence on me, and the studies and experience were unforgettable," Plaisuntea said.

Statistics indicate that since March 8, 2016, when the first Luban Workshop was set up, the college has trained 11,000 students and 600 teachers. The EPIP Educational Center in Thailand has trained 255 teachers.

As of the middle of this month, China had set up 25 Luban Workshops worldwide, and that figure is expected to rise later this year.

China develops a taste for neighbor's cuisine

HANGZHOU — The aromas of milk tea and curry waft from a quaint restaurant as enthusiastic diners feast on authentic Thai dishes.

The restaurant, in Shouchang Ancient Town, Zhejiang province, is owned by Kenny Yang, a Thai chef with over 30 years' catering experience. After working in a number of Chinese cities for 10 years, Yang settled in Shouchang, his wife's hometown, in 2019.

As business exchanges between China and Thailand have deepened in recent years, restaurants like Yang's, featuring distinctive Thai elements, have sprung up all over China.

In Hangzhou, Zhejiang's capital, there are over 1,000 restaurants offering Thai food either as the main cuisine or as side dishes, according to Dianping, a popular Chinese review and rating service. Popular Thai restaurants can be found in almost all of the city's major business districts.

In a shopping mall alongside West Lake, a major commercial area, 20 tables at the Motai Thai restaurant were already taken before 5:30 pm, and a line had already begun to form.

"Diners in Hangzhou are very fond of Thai food. During peak hours, they sometimes have to wait more than an hour for a meal here," one restaurant manager said.

Yang's restaurant is far from the city center, yet it still attracts many foodies in search of the authentic taste of Thailand. Every weekend, diners from the surrounding areas and downtown Hangzhou flood in.

"In order to recreate the authentic taste of Thailand as closely as possible, many ingredients have to be imported," Yang said.

Thanks to the increasing popularity of Thai food and close business exchanges between the two countries, it's getting easier to find fresh ingredients.

Yang said that it used to take two to three weeks or even longer to import ingredients from Thailand, but the development of logistics means there are now many more importers and suppliers.

"Now, Thai ingredients and seasonings can be delivered by my suppliers in Shanghai and Guangzhou (in Guangdong province) within two or three days," he said, adding that the convenient logistics bolstered his confidence in opening a Thai restaurant in a small town.

He decided to open a restaurant in Shouchang because of the town's resemblance to his home.

"The pleasant environment, the leisurely pace of life and the taste for spicy food are very similar to Nakhon Pathom," Yang said, adding that the town's beautiful scenery, friendly people and comfortable life also contributed to his decision.

In addition to the rapid growth in Thai restaurants, more imported Thai foods are finding a market in China.

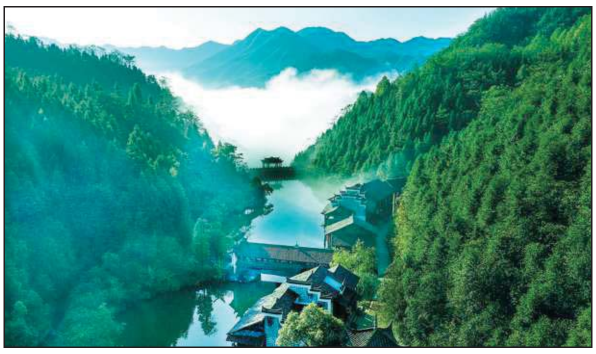
Data from retail platform Hema Fresh show that sales of imported Thai coconut water doubled in the first 10 months of the year, compared with the same period last year.

At the same time, sales of fresh Thai coconuts have grown 2.5-fold on the platform since 2018. This year's sales are expected to reach around 140 million yuan ($19.6 million).

China is Thailand's largest trading partner, its largest export market for agricultural products and a major source of foreign investment.

In recent years, economic and trade cooperation between the two countries has increased despite the pandemic. Last year, the bilateral trade volume exceeded $100 billion for the first time, and is expected to hit a new high this year.

XINHUA



From left: A picturesque view of Meishan ecological park. China Dark Tea Museum is located in Anhua. Yuntai Mountain scenic spot is a must-see destination in Anhua. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tea drives Anhua's culture and tourism

Economy has maintained strong growth and earned honorary titles in Hunan province

Farmers pick tea leaves at a plantation in Auhua of Yiyang city, Hunan province.

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As a key tea-producing area in Hunan province, Anhua county in Yiyang city combines tea with tourism and its cultural industry to promote high-quality development and create a wonderful experience for visitors from China and abroad.

"Integrating tea culture into tourism is a unique feature of Anhua," said Shi Luming, Party secretary of the county.

Walking along the green ridges in Anhua, the air is filled with the refreshing fragrance of tea. The county, known as the hometown of dark tea in China, is on the right track to boosting the integrated development of "tea tourism, culture, sports and health" and showing a new look of great changes in mountains, rivers and villages.

In recent years, Anhua's cultural tourism industry has maintained a strong growth trend and won honorary titles such as "Tourism County in Hunan Province", "China's Best Health and Leisure Tourism Resort" and "Hunan Province Global Tourism Creation Demonstration Zone".

Anhua has created a number of tea gardens such as the 4A-level Yuntai Mountain scenic spot and the Flower Sea Ecological Park. It has also built a number of tea-themed homestays including Yuntai Mountain Banshan Yinsu and Tangxi Xianglong Villa as well as tea tourism towns.

The Flower Sea Ecological Park is a demonstration base for the integrated development of dark tea planting and tourism in the region. Flowers are the focus there, together with four seasonal gardens. There are standardized and neat terraced fields, vertical tea gardens with three interlaced colors and artistic tea gardens with pictures and text.

In addition to viewing flowers, visitors can enjoy entertainment projects such as Yingbin Waterfall, Sightseeing Water Tower and Glass Tianhe Rafting.

Prosperous heritage

Anhua is striving to tap into its profound historical and cultural heritage based on its ancient tea culture dating back hundreds of years when merchants rode camels traveling on the bluestone road, today known as Tea-Horse Road. They rode alongside caravans transporting tea sold to other places. The early buildings of the Anhua Dark Tea Factory are important historical and cultural heritage sites that have witnessed the prosperity of the county's tea industry.

Established in 1950, the Anhua Dark Tea Factory had promoted the development of the region's tea industry and witnessed the advancement of the tea-processing machinery.

Dark tea master Feng Shaoqiu, who had been engaged in tea research in Anhua for 14 years, created more than 70 dark tea refining and processing methods, introduced five tea machines from Shanghai, pioneered the mechanization of tea production in Hunan and realized the "manual kneading of tea".

Huang Benhong, another expert in tea science, who was the first director of the Anhua Dark Tea Factory, took the lead in organizing tea cooperatives, created the "four-way tea-making method", carried out tea machinery research and invented iron-wood structure shakers.

Yongxi Bridge, built with bluestone mortar and wooden mortise and tenon structure, has tightened the friendship between the region and other countries since ancient times. The tea ceremony expanded to other places and business transactions were accompanied by ideological and cultural exchanges.

Since 2006, Anhua has adhered to green development, identified tea as a leading industry for enriching its people and strengthening the county.

Anhua's culture-tourism integrated development path is getting smoother. Many talented people return to their hometowns to start businesses, invest in the tea tourism industry and build ecological parks and museums. The vigorous development of Anhua's tea industry has driven the rapid growth of tea art, logistics, packaging and tourism.

Statistics show that more than 350,000 people in the county are currently engaged in tea-related production and business activities. Anhua dark tea has gradually grown into a rich leading industry and become a pillar of rural vitalization in the county.

Anhua has 24,120 hectares of tea gardens and 210 tea processing enterprises. Relying on the local characteristic tea industry, Anhua takes advantage of its beautiful rural environment and fully integrates it with catering, tourism, leisure and entertainment industries. It aims to drive regional economic growth and increase farmers' incomes.

The integrated development of tea and tourism has enriched the tourism industry and led the people of tea villages to start businesses together. During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), Anhua will comprehensively promote rural vitalization, accelerate the integrated development of tea, tourism, cultural and recreational industries and strive to build industrial clusters. This will create an "Anhua model" of integrated development in China's tea tourism.

Feng Zhiwei and Zhu Youfang contributed to this story.

Iconic products carry forward tradition

By HAO NAN
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Dark tea from Anhua county in Hunan province is one of the most iconic products to carry forward the traditional tea culture of Hunan in Central China.

Often mistaken for black tea, dark tea is named for leaves that blacken after special treatment.

With its unique growing environment, exquisite processing skills and long history, Anhua dark tea has been approved as a national geographical indication product, and has gained increasing popularity among consumers worldwide.

Anhua is surrounded by undulating mountains and boasts crisscrossing rivers and streams.

The county's subtropical monsoon climate brings a long succession of wet days and a short period of cold weather.

This enables the growing period of local tea trees to last more than seven months, and meet all the requirements for the growth of high-quality tea leaves.

Moreover, the most distinctive feature lies in the unique moraine gravel of Anhua. The soil weathered by this plate shale has suitable acidity and is extremely rich in organic matter, an ideal environment to plant tea trees, according to *The Classic of Tea*.

The book written by Lu Yu (733-804) is the first definitive work on cultivating, making and drinking tea. Lu is respected as the Sage of Tea for his contribution to the Chinese tea culture.

Clockwise from top: Farmers prepare to pick tea leaves at a garden in Anhua. Workers make tea baskets at a local factory. Residents transport tea along the ancient path in Anhua. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Liquid of Anhua dark tea is red-yellow and bright. It smells thick and has long-lasting mixed aromas of medicine, stewed fruit and wood.

The dark tea can be divided into seven varieties in three categories, all of which use the raw dark tea (without compression) as the material.

Production of the Anhua raw black tea needs six procedures, each with a strict process. Even the slightest mistake will affect its quality and taste.

The first step is to divide fresh leaves into four levels to produce different qualities of dark tea. The leaves will then be watered and steamed to become more soft. When finished, they will be rolled into strips and prepared for the next step.

As the most critical procedure, the fourth step is important for the formation of dark tea's color, aromas and taste.

The leaves will be placed in dark and clean rooms in huge piles, all at a height of less than 1 meter. They will be covered with wet cloth or straw rain capes to help control temperature and humidity.

After fermentation, the leaves will be kneaded and twisted again for six to eight minutes before being dried. Smoking or drying the leaves over pinewood gives Anhua dark tea its unique characters.

Zhu Youfang contributed to this story.

Tea plants and flowers grow on hills in Anhua.

This page is sponsored by the Hunan provincial government.

COMMENT

Editorials

Further sanctions on DPRK will only make peninsula situation more volatile

Those decrying the latest missile test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as an "intolerable" threat to those living in the "peace-loving nations", by which they mean the Western countries, fail to mention that the COVID-19 pandemic, other crises and the harsh sanctions imposed on the country have effectively made the DPRK a forgotten corner of the world and prevented it from receiving needed assistance from the international community.

It was against this background, as well as the continuous bolstering of the United States' military input and deployment in the region that last week's missile test was carried out.

The stern warning about a response to possible new sanctions on her country Kim Yo-jong, deputy head of the Publicity and Information Department of the Workers' Party of Korea, sent the Republic of Korea and the United States on Thursday should not fall on deaf ears.

That the message from Pyongyang was met with the usual smug sense of superiority from those deploring the missile test is no surprise. But what they dismissed as "insult-laden threats" deserve careful consideration. Not least, why the ROK "had not been our target" under the previous Moon Jae-in government?

In case anyone should be in any doubt, Kim spelled it out: the Moon government always sought reconciliation with the North. That should serve to point to the right direction to prevent the situation from spiraling out of control, namely that the DPRK's core concerns on its security and its people's livelihoods need to be properly addressed.

The US is well aware the sanctions only serve to prolong the crisis and deepen the feud. But in the eyes of many shortsighted strategists in Washington, fostering suspicion and animosity on the peninsula is in line with US interests.

As the Chinese ambassador to the United Nations said in a Security Council meeting on the issue on Monday, it is the US that should take the initiative, demonstrate sincerity, propose realistic and feasible plans, respond to the DPRK's legitimate concerns in a positive way, and push for dialogue to be turned into reality at an early date.

Any new sanctions will only fuel the mutual suspicion that has reemerged and steer the peninsula situation in a dangerous direction. The US and its allies flexing their muscles will doubtlessly be perceived as a grave provocation and substantial threat to the DPRK, which has little means to counter any displays of hostility except by demonstrating it has the means to respond to any aggression.

That the peninsula situation improved after the two Koreas offered each other olive branches and the US engaged in direct dialogue with the DPRK, indicates that a long-belated end to the crisis can be peacefully achieved. But that requires trust which is once again in short supply.

Washington's economic hegemony hits dead end

That Dutch Foreign Trade Minister Liesje Schreinemacher has voiced resistance to following Washington's attempts to cut off China from semiconductor technology sends a message that the united front the United States has sought to forge to maintain its hegemony in the technology sphere is shaky or even beginning to crumble.

The Dutch trade minister told lawmakers on Tuesday that the Netherlands will make its own decision regarding ASML's chip gear sales to China amid trade rule talks with the US and other allies. She also told lawmakers at the parliament in the Hague, "It is important that we defend our own interests — our national safety, but also our economic interests."

European Union negotiators are reported to be working on a number of contentious trade issues with Washington. Countries, most vocally France, have said the measures could damage European economies and have raised the possibility of filing a complaint with the World Trade Organization.

The Netherlands is home to ASML Holding NV, which dominates the market for one-of-a-kind, cutting-edge chip-making equipment that has become a focus of the US government's attempts to limit China.

However, China is the third-largest market for the Dutch company, representing 14.7 percent of its global sales, to say nothing of the great potential of the Chinese market. Currently, ASML cannot ship its advanced extreme ultraviolet lithography systems (EUV) to China because it cannot obtain an export license from the Dutch government, thanks to pressure from the US.

Alan Estevez, US undersecretary of commerce for industry and security, will travel to the Netherlands this month to discuss export controls.

Whatever the result of the talks, it is becoming increasingly clear that it will be difficult for Washington to persuade European countries into following its unilateralism at the cost of their own economic interests.

The world is not what it used to be. It has become more democratic and pluralistic. It is unfair and unjustifiable for the US to take it for granted that countries will do its bidding when it shows scant concern for their interests.

As far as the global economy is concerned, what Washington has been doing in its economic sanctions in the name of national security has seriously disrupted the globalized industry chains and supply chains, which has caused economic losses for many companies and countries. Washington's way of politicizing economic activities has become a scourge for the development of the global economy.

If Washington continues to place its geopolitical objectives before everything and to pressure other countries into acting as its accomplice, an increasing number of countries, including its allies in Europe, will turn their back on it to defend their own interests and safeguard the global economic order from being derailed.

Unethical and unfair, Washington's economic hegemony is reaching a dead end.

US has no qualms about beggaring its friends

The European Union is now facing an economic recession, with manufacturing activity in October plunging to its lowest level since May 2020 and economic growth for the eurozone declining to 0.2 percent in the third quarter of this year. The massive energy price increases, mainly as a result of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have led to a surge in consumer prices, which hit a record high of 10.7 percent last month, compared to 9.9 percent in September.

Compounding the EU's economic problems is a looming subsidy war with the United States after President Joe Biden rolled out a sweeping $369 billion energy and climate legislation in August to support green industries.

The huge subsidies the US now provides under the Inflation Reduction Act to companies in specific sectors such as electric vehicles have made many European businesses consider relocating their investments to the United States from Europe.

The trend, which is likely to turn the continent into an industrial wasteland, has prompted EU Industry Commissioner Thierry Breton to warn that Washington's new subsidy package poses an "existential challenge" to Europe's economy.

To counter US subsidies, the EU is reportedly considering rolling out a fund of its own, possibly a "European Sovereignty Fund" to assist businesses investing in Europe. It is now a matter of utmost urgency to "revert the deindustrialization process taking place", Breton said.

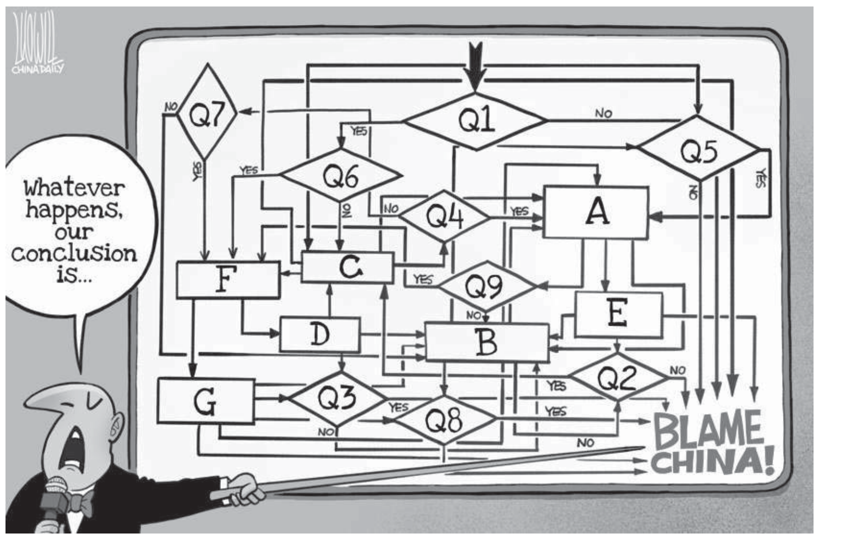
French President Emmanuel Macron has been particularly vehement in trying to join European forces against the unjustified and unfair US economic move. "We need a Buy European Act like the Americans, we need to reserve (our subsidies) for our European manufacturers," he said in a recent TV interview, in reference to the subsidies to EVs.

The dire situation that Europe finds itself in may serve as a chance for it to make some soul-searching when it comes to its relationship with the US. Many EU countries were elated at the prospect of the possible political, economic and security benefits they would be able to reap when Biden declared that "America is back, the transatlantic alliance is back".

Yet the beggar-thy-neighbor economic move Washington has made, in addition to other things such as the high-priced liquefied natural gas the US has been exporting to Europe, seems to make his claim that the US-Europe partnership "is and must remain the cornerstone of all we hope to accomplish in the 21st century" a cheap promise.

Europe must retain its strategic autonomy for the good of its own interests when dealing with the US.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Human rights mean control of gun culture and violence

A shooting at a Walmart in Chesapeake, Virginia, in the United States late on Tuesday left at least six people dead and some injured, three days after a shooting at a Colorado nightclub left five people dead and 25 injured. The number of mass gun killings in the US has now exceeded 600 for the third year in a row.

Gun violence was a major issue during the recent midterm elections in the US. US President Joe Biden said that gun violence must be tackled, but repeated shootings indicate that the problem is only getting worse.

It is not surprising that deaths from gun violence in the US are far higher than in any other developed country, given that with just 4.2 percent of the world's population, the country has 46 percent of the world's civilian guns.

As of Monday, more than 39,000 people had lost their lives to gun violence in the US this year, data from the Gun Violence Archive show.

The spate of mass shootings across the US has also led to a sharp rise in depression and anxiety among young people. In fact, at least half the number of suicides in the US are reportedly linked to gun violence. Gun violence has also had an impact on the overall atmosphere in US society.

In June, the US Supreme Court gave a ruling overturning a New York state law that restricted people from carrying concealed guns; gun supporters hailed the ruling as a victory.

Opponents believe the ruling is not conducive to dealing with gun violence. Under public pressure, Biden signed a bipartisan compromise gun control bill in June, and the White House announced in July the "Safer America Plan", which would spend $13 billion over five years to hire and train an additional 100,000 police officers.

However, US policymakers are wary of addressing the real issue, such as lax gun control laws, lobbying by interest groups and partisan polarization.

The long-standing gun violence in the US is rooted in its "gun culture", which came after the Second Amendment to the US Constitution, adopted in 1791, was judged to protect the right of citizens to own arms.

Given that the right to life is the most important human right, whether the US can effectively curb gun violence should be an important yardstick for the international community to measure its human rights.

— CRI.CN

Not theft, it's hard work and talent

A report released by the World Intellectual Property Organization on Monday says that China submitted 1.59 million patent applications in 2021, almost half of the global total.

China has been championing the world's application of patents for 11 successive years. Besides, the number of effective patents China holds reached 3.6 million in 2021, surpassing the United States and championing the world.

However, all these numbers have heavily upset Kevin McCarthy, the Republican leader in the US House of Representatives, who told Fox News that "China is the No 1 country when it comes to intellectual property theft", adding that he would form a select committee on China if elected speaker of the House.

It's a fact that the Chinese people are impressing the world with their hard work. China remains the world's factory, but the Chinese people are no more just standing at the assembly line to put parts together; rather they are contributing to global development with their excellent R&D skills. The fact that China leads the number of patent applications for 11 successive years is the best evidence.

It is fair to say that China is No 1 in IP creation. By ignoring this fact and slandering China as "No 1 in IP theft" instead, Senator McCarthy has exposed to the world his disbelief at how a developing country with an ideology different from that of the US could make it this far. His advisors must tell him to open his eyes and face the reality.

After China and its runner-up the US, Japan ranks third on WIPO's list, and the share of the two Asian countries is as high as 67.6 percent. The dominance of European and North American countries in the tech sector is declining now, and even the most conservative politician needs to accept that fact.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

EU should not let White House sway it

The fierce debates on EU-China relations in the European Parliament, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union and the European Council, held almost at the same time, show the urgency with which the bloc is seeking to adjust its China policy.

Amid the clamor for decoupling, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell struck a more rational note in the debate at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, on Tuesday.

Given the US-provoked Ukraine crisis and the United States' self-centered Inflation Reduction Act have exposed clearly the true colors of the cross-Atlantic alliance, he urged the EU to keep its China policy independent from the China containment strategies of the US.

The speech Borrell gave to EU lawmakers indicates he has studied the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China very carefully, and he has also reviewed and reflected on his first-hand experience in his exchanges with Chinese policymakers.

In looking at EU-China relations in an objective and comprehensive way, the EU foreign policy chief was better serving the interests of the bloc, unlike those EU politicians, who lacking first-hand experience, rely heavily on second-hand, unverified information from the US side and thus just parrot Washington's China discourse.

Saying that "differences should not and are not stopping us from engaging with each other", Borrell pointed out that while the EU's approach toward China should not be naive neither should it be alarmist. Engaging with China does not preclude competing with it and standing up for EU values as well as the bloc's strategic interests, nor does doing those preclude working with China to address common challenges and tap the potential of economic cooperation.

As he pointed out, diversifying sources of supplies, and improving internal resilience — something both the EU, China and other major economies are doing in the face of the US' attempts to reshape global supply chains — do not necessitate decoupling from China.

Rather than decoupling, Borell called for the EU to further extend the economic and political dimensions of its partnership with China. To that end, the EU should resist the US' attempts to politicize trade, business and technology, and keep the communication channels with China open.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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VIEWS

Bikash Kali Das

China, India key shapers of the Asian Century

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China was held in Beijing in October. The congress was significant for both China and the world at large. The meeting presented crucial strategic plans to transform China into a modern socialist nation in all respects. China made significant progress toward a number of milestones over the past five years, all of which will have long-term implications for both the Chinese people and the international community.

There are three significant events that have had a tremendous impact on the well-being of the Chinese people over the past 10 years.

First, the Chinese people embraced the CPC's first centenary goal, then the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and finally, with the resolve of the Chinese leadership, China completely eradicated extreme poverty in the country.

Most of the international community applauds what China has accomplished and supports its efforts to advance world peace and create a community with a shared future. And many countries are now trying to draw lessons from China's development plans for their own development.

With this in mind, China has introduced the Global Development Initiative, which could accelerate the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and foster synergy for global development, and it continues to advance the Belt and Road Initiative. China has significantly improved global economic governance with the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Asian countries in particular are keenly interested in and eager to see how China's future social and economic development can increase global stability and promote global development. The policies introduced by China in the coming years will not only guide China's progress on the road to modernization but in doing so also help stimulate the global economic recovery. China has offered a model for global development, which will have a profound impact on both Asia and the rest of the world. China's ongoing development will help support an open global economy by creating new opportunities for other regions. President Xi Jinping has consistently urged all nations to uphold the principles of humanity, peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom and to foster intercultural understanding and establish stronger ties with other peoples.

Both nations are dedicated to advancing a fairer approach to international affairs, advocating partnerships founded on mutual respect, transparency and cooperation, and seek to extend the convergence of interests with other countries.

India and China are intertwined economically and culturally, and with their enormous youth populations and abundant resources, China and India's rapid development will radically change the world. China and India agree that pragmatic people-to-people engagement and reciprocal cross-cultural understanding are the keys to a community with a shared future, and both countries are on similar modernization paths. China is currently India's biggest trading partner, and challenges including food and energy security are high on both countries' list of priorities.

Both countries now command a level of global influence. China since 1978 and India since 1990 have both experienced significant economic growth, which has pushed Asia toward an unprecedented level of regional affluence. When it comes to developing friendship and collaboration with other nations, China and India both abide by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Both nations are dedicated to advancing a fairer approach to international affairs, advocating partnerships founded on mutual respect, transparency and cooperation, and seek to extend the convergence of interests with other countries. China strives to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with other developing countries and protect the shared interests of the developing world, guided by the principles of equality, genuine results, affinity and good faith. China is also committed to the greater good and shared interests. The policies of China and India will shape the Asian Century as well as the world system.

It is necessary to look at the key components of cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two civilizations as well as opportunities for rapprochement in a variety of fields such as health, education, tourism and natural heritage conservation in order to enable the development of appropriate interaction between India and China.

China upholds the goal of common prosperity for all countries and it will continue to offer novel and constructive suggestions and concepts to promote global development and solidarity.

The author is founder and director of Xu Fancheng Culture Study Center in India. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Wang Jinbin

Will Fed's rate hikes prick the bubble?

A bunch of US tech companies that have led the tech stocks boom over the past 10 years are announcing workforce cuts one after another. Twitter has reportedly decided to fire about 4,400 contract workers following the layoff of 50 percent of its employees, while Meta (originally Facebook Inc) is laying off more than 11,000 employees, about 13 percent of the total.

Since March, the US Federal Reserve has aggressively hiked interest rates to rein in inflation that hit a 40-year high recently. The US Labor Department announced on Thursday that the country's consumer price index increased 0.4 percent month-on-month in October and 7.7 percent year-on-year, both lower than estimates. But inflation in the United States is still running high. Desirably, the Fed wants to keep inflation growth to below 0.2 percent a month. But even in that case it would be impossible for the Fed to keep inflation growth below 2 percent in the long run.

As such, the Fed has to raise interest rates in order to control high inflation, which in turn could cause the market bubble to burst.

Due to the radical interest rate hikes and rapid decline in the growth of broad money supply, Nasdaq has fallen from 16,000 points to nearly 10,000 points — a drop of nearly 30 percent — this year. The Fed's tightening of interest rates so far has considerably squeezed out tech stocks' valuation bubble.

But the continued hike in interest rates could increase the risk of a hard landing for the US economy. Also, the recent large-scale layoffs announced by tech companies indicate the economic outlook has deteriorated, prompting companies to reduce labor costs and overcome innovation bottlenecks thereafter. The Fed's continuing interest rates hikes could make it harder for tech companies to prosper in the future.

Besides, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the All-Transactions House Price Index in the US has risen sharply. In the second quarter of 2020, it was 454.7, increasing to 617.9 in the second quarter of this year. Plus, the average monthly housing inventory was only 44.2 percent of that before the COVID-19 outbreak. To be sure, inadequate supply has largely pushed up housing prices in the US.

And rising housing prices will inevitably lead to rising rents, which may manifest in one to one and a half years. That means rents could rise in the next few months, and decline only in the middle of next year. As the US economy declines, unemployment rises, income and demand fall, and housing prices slide.

Whether or not the bubble will burst remains to be seen. Due to the real demand in the US' real estate market, the financial leverage of residents has remained relatively stable, with considerable improvement in residents' solvency. And since the high-leverage of housing units in the financial market is much less than before the 2008-09 subprime mortgage crisis, the possibility of another systemic crisis is not high.

However, if the Fed continues to aggressively raise interest rates to control inflation and the US economy suffers a hard landing, the valuation of all financial assets will undergo further adjustment, and the possibility of systemic risks will increase.

The Fed faces a trade-off: slowing rate hikes in the future, reducing the risk of a hard landing, and enduring relatively high inflation for a relatively long period of time — or creating systemic financial risks in financial markets by overly aggressive tightening.

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Chen Weihua

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West's hypocrisy can't take shine off World Cup

FIFA President Gianni Infantino was spot on when he slammed Western countries for "hypocrisy" for trying to give "moral lessons" to other nations.

A Swiss Italian, Infantino said on Saturday that "for what we Europeans have been doing around the world in the last 3,000 years, we should be apologizing for the next 3,000 years before starting to give moral lessons to people".

He was responding to the criticism by Western media about human rights abuses in Qatar, host of the 2022 World Cup, such as the treatment of migrant workers and the LGBT community.

FIFA warned several European teams that their captains would face yellow cards if they wear the OneLove armbands in a bid to raise LGBT awareness during the matches.

French President Emmanuel Macron pointed out last week that sport should not be politicized, referring to his plan to go to Qatar if the French national team, the defending champion, reaches the semifinals.

However, France politicized sport when it called for Russia to be banned from the World Cup qualifying games days after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February.

When the International Olympic Committee then urged that Russia be banned from participating in international sports events, many international sports federations quickly followed suit. But IOC President Thomas Bach said last month that Russian athletes could be allowed back to compete at Olympic Games as long as they don't support the war in Ukraine.

The fact that people all over the world, regardless of their political and religious beliefs, are enjoying watching World Cup shows that sports transcend politics.

Punishing athletes for the actions of their governments will do nothing to help end the conflict. On the contrary, sports have the magic power of bringing different people together. Engaging more Russian athletes could contribute to finding a solution to the conflict.

The fact that people all over the world, regardless of their political and religious beliefs, are enjoying watching World Cup shows that sports transcend politics. People cheer teams and players they support and others for their good performances.

People have the right to express their concerns about human rights issues, but they have to pick the right time and right place, and those are not a sports event.

Certain sports such as snooker, golf and tennis even require spectators to remain silent. No one wants a soccer match to be spoiled by protesters shouting slogans.

When the World Cup kicked off on Sunday, the BBC chose not to broadcast the opening ceremony and instead spent the time talking about "human rights abuses" in Qatar.

That reflects the hypocrisy Infantino pointed out.

The BBC did not boycott the opening ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012, which took place a month after Julian Assange was forced to seek asylum in Ecuador's embassy in London due to extradition concerns, or the opening ceremony of the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics in Utah in 2002, which was held months after the US invasion of Afghanistan.

In its 2021 report, Amnesty International cited human concerns in France from racial profiling to migrants' rights. The Human Rights Watch cited in its report the US human rights violations from racial injustice and the world's highest criminal incarceration rates to women's health rights and the rights of non-citizens.

Since they spent so much time nitpicking the alcohol ban during the World Cup matches, there will be plenty for Western media to point their fingers at these Olympic Games. But we all know they won't.

DOCUMENT / WORLD

Joint statement on the 20th anniversary of the declaration on the conduct of parties in the South China Sea

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 11 November 2022

We, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the People's Republic of China (hereinafter: the Parties), gathered on the occasions of the 25th ASEAN-China Summit and the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, on 11 November 2022.

RECOGNISING the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation;

RECALLING that the Parties signed the DOC on 4 November 2002, as well as adopted the Guidelines for the Implementation of the DOC in 2011, the Joint Statement of the 15th ASEAN-China Summit on the 10th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in 2012, and the Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States and China on the Full and Effective Implementation of the DOC in 2016;

REAFFIRMING that the DOC is a milestone document in ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations that embodies the collective commitment of the Parties to promote peace, stability, mutual trust, and confidence in the region, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is commemorating its 40th anniversary this year;

RECALLING the achievements by ASEAN Member States and China on the implementation of the DOC, which contribute to the peace and stability in the South China Sea and the promotion of friendly relations and practical maritime cooperation;

NOTING that the situation in the South China Sea has changed tremendously since the signing of the DOC and recognising in this regard the imperative of strengthened efforts and heightened goodwill towards the full and effective implementation of the DOC;

APPRECIATING the progress in the COC negotiations, and reaffirming that the future adoption of the COC would further promote peace and stability in the region.

WE HEREBY:

1.Reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN), the 1982 UNCLOS, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and other universally recognised principles of international law which shall serve as the basic norms governing state-to-state relations;

2.Reaffirm our mutual respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with international law;

3.Reaffirm our shared commitment to maintaining and promoting peace, security, and stability in the South China Sea;

4.Reaffirm that the Parties concerned undertake to resolve territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS;

5.Reaffirm our respect for and commitment to the safety and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS;

6.Reaffirm our commitment to fully and effectively implement the DOC in its entirety;

7.Continue to explore and undertake practical maritime cooperation initiatives, including in fields such as marine environmental protection, marine scientific research, safety of navigation and communication at sea, search and rescue operation and combating transnational crime;

8.Continue to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability, and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation;

9.Commit to maintain and promote an environment conducive to the full and effective implementation of the DOC and to the early adoption of a substantive and effective COC, based on consensus, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

ADOPTED in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on the Eleventh of November in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Two.

Oregon, Fujian in 'perfect match'

By **LIU YINMENG** in Los Angeles
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E-commerce is providing opportunities for small and medium-sized US enterprises to tap into the Chinese market, said trade experts.

These opportunities took up much of the discussion at an online session on Monday on new channels of cross-border collaboration.

The event was hosted by the Oregon China Council and supported by government agencies from Fujian and Oregon, which became sister states in 1984. The two sides complement each other in various areas, officials said.

"As we all know, Oregon has prominent advantages in outdoor equipment, sportswear, agriculture and food processing industries," said Wang Deyang, deputy director-general of the trade development bureau of China's commerce ministry. "In recent years, the Chinese market has seen a significant rise in outdoor sports and a rapid increase in consumers' extra attention to food quality."

The "perfect match" between Oregon and Fujian on supply and demand generates great market potential for the "outdoor economy" and "dinner table upgrading", Wang said.

Main driver

"Meanwhile, the recent emergence of global cross-border e-commerce, with China as one of the main drivers, has added momentum to the growth of those industries," he said.

Wang stressed that business cooperation plays a vital role in deepening Sino-US economic and trade relations. He noted that the Chinese e-commerce market is developing vigorously, and the trade official encouraged more US companies to go to China to "share the development opportunities together".

Jess Paulson, director of market access and certification programs at Oregon's agriculture department, described the state as having a diverse agricultural landscape.

"It is the source of strength for Oregon agriculture. It's unfortunately also the greatest weakness of Oregon agriculture," Paulson said. "We have many products, but often not so much volume for any of them, except a handful of the biggest products."

As a result, finding the appropriate marketing channel for exports has been one of the greatest challenges the state faces, he said.

"E-commerce has been a growing interest to Oregon food and beverage producers, and I'm very much hoping that this opportunity will be something that's very helpful for our exporters," he said.

Firefighters and rescue personnel work at the scene where a missile struck a building in central Kyiv on Wednesday. JEFF J MITCHELL / GETTY IMAGES

Russia slams European Parliament

By **REN QI** in Moscow
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Russia slammed the European Parliament's resolution on Thursday, calling the resolution absurd. It also called the agency "a sponsor of idiocy".

The European Union's legislative body passed the decision on Wednesday in a landslide vote in Strasbourg. The document was supported by 494 MEPs, with 58 votes against and 44 abstentions. The resolution, which recognizes Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism" and a "state which uses means of terrorism", merged drafts penned by three different factions of the European Parliament.

"European Parliament members have given the member states an idea of developing European Union's legal framework 'for the designation of states as sponsors of terrorism and states which use means of terrorism' and called on European capitals to put Russia on this blacklist, so that no one has any doubt which state they mean," Russia's mission to the EU said on its Telegram channel.

The resolution is the EU's latest condemnation of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

The move is largely symbolic, but Russian television channel RT called the document "nonbinding", while state news agency TASS said the resolution is just "recommendatory". The resolution urged member states to develop a new legal framework, which would allow the blacklisting, on terrorism grounds, not just for individuals or organizations, but entire nations.

Cyberattack claim

Shortly after lawmakers approved the resolution, the European Parliament's website was hit by a cyberattack claimed by pro-Russian hackers on Wednesday.

European Pirate Party MEP Mikulas Peksa said there are reports that the "pro-Russian hacking group Killnet has claimed responsibility for the attack".

The Russian government has not yet made any response to the attack. But Moscow has been accusing Kyiv's Western backers of ignoring its warnings that NATO's informal expansion into Ukraine was crossing Russia's red line.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed the move by the European Parliament, declaring that Russia had to be "isolated at all levels".

Late on Wednesday, Zelensky spoke to the United Nations Security Council, urging the council to support the Ukrainian peace formula following a wave of Russian missile strikes.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces said Russia launched 70 missiles at Ukraine on Wednesday in its latest "large-scale attack on crucial infrastructure facilities".

After the strikes, more than two-thirds of the Ukrainian capital was still without power on Thursday morning and many residents had no running water.

In Washington, the White House said the United States is sending an additional $400 million in ammunition and generators to Ukraine, and is pulling gear from its own stockpile to get the support to Kyiv as fast as possible, as Russia continues to target Ukraine's energy sources.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Walmart store shooter identified

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
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A Walmart supervisor who opened fire on his co-workers in the break room of a store in Virginia, killing six people and himself "feared government surveillance" and was described as "weird" by former employees.

Andre Bing, 31, was an overnight team leader at Walmart in Chesapeake and had been employed since 2010, the nation's largest retailer said in a statement on Wednesday. Walmart US President and CEO John Furner said the shooting was a "tragic event".

Bing opened fire with a pistol at 10 pm on Tuesday. Chesapeake police chief Mark Solesky said police arrived at the scene minutes later. Bing's body was found with multiple rounds of ammunition. He had no body armor.

The city of Chesapeake confirmed that three individuals, including the shooter, were located deceased in the break room of the store. One victim was located deceased toward the front of the store. Three other victims were transported to local hospitals for further treatment, but succumbed to their injuries.

Former co-workers described Bing as "weird". At least two employees said he had covered up the camera of his phone with tape because he feared that the government was watching him.

Police were trying to determine a motive.

The shooting came just two days before Thanksgiving. Police said the store had 50 shoppers at the time.

US President Joe Biden lamented the shooting and called for gun reform action.

"Because of yet another horrific and senseless act of violence, there are now even more tables across the country that will have empty seats this Thanksgiving," he said in a statement released by the White House.

The United States has had 606 mass shootings so far this year, according to the nonprofit Gun Violence Archive which tracks shootings. Out of those, 20 involved five or more deaths.

The Walmart shooting was the second in just a week in Virginia, after three University of Virginia football players were killed by another player as they traveled back to campus from a field trip on a charter bus on Nov 13.

It also occurred three days after a gunman opened fire at a gay club in Colorado, killing five people and wounding 17 people.

Agencies contributed to this story.

EU seen as struggling on path to strategic autonomy

By **CHEN YINGQUN**
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Strategic autonomy remains an important ambition for the European Union, but the bloc is still a long way from achieving that goal amid changing global developments, analysts said.

The EU has long had the goal for it to make independent choices and act freely based on the region's interests — cutting across the economic, security, and foreign policy spheres. But, in the eyes of many, progress has fallen short of ambition.

Strategic autonomy has been on the EU's agenda since the adoption of its Global Strategy report in 2016. It was given even higher priority in 2021 after a series of events that served as a reality check for the bloc.

But many of those looking for further progress on the EU's goal were disappointed when, after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February, the EU member countries once again fell into the pattern of following in the footsteps of the United States. Aside from their sustained military assistance for Ukraine, these countries also followed the US in imposing severe sanctions on Russia, regardless of the pain inflicted on their own economies and the resulting surge in energy prices and living costs for their people.

'Light-years away'

In an interview published on the website of the German newspaper Handelsblatt on Nov 14, Wolfgang Ischinger, a former chairman of the Munich Security Conference, said that although strategic autonomy is great, "Europe is light-years away from strategic autonomy".

Cui Hongjian, director of the European Studies Department at the China Institute of International Studies, said the Russia-Ukraine conflict has disrupted the EU's pace of pushing forward on the path to strategic autonomy.

At first, the bloc planned to strengthen autonomy in multiple fields at the same time — the economy, technology, energy, and security, he said. But the Ukraine conflict forced the EU to change its focus from long-term strategic planning to a short-term crisis response. This shift means the EU has ended up strengthening its security dependence on the US, the scholar said.

Sven Biscop, director of the Europe in the World Programme at the Egmont-Royal Institute for International Relations, said that the EU countries, despite their limited stocks of arms and equipment, have done all they can to support Ukraine and "for the very first time the EU paid for arms transfers to a country at war".

Now both NATO and the EU have accelerated their efforts to increase European defense capabilities.

"Strategic autonomy remains an EU objective," Biscop said.

He said that in economic and diplomatic terms, the EU is an autonomous actor and that means it should stand up for its own interests. Recognition of this status is evident in the decision by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to visit Beijing at the start of this month, and by the actions of leaders of other EU countries in meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, also this month, at the G20 Summit on Indonesia's resort island of Bali.

"The EU certainly will continue to set its own course vis-à-vis China (and will not immediately decouple), rather than just following the US," he said.

When meeting with European leaders, President Xi emphasized a spirit of independence and autonomy when speaking on how bilateral relations can be further developed.

Zhang Lihua, a professor in the Department of International Relations and director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Tsinghua University in Beijing, said the EU has been working toward true strategic autonomy but that it is still far from achieving that goal.

"The biggest constraint for the EU to achieve its strategic autonomy is that it has no independent defense power and must rely on the US and NATO for defense and security, so they have to follow the policies of the US in terms of defense," Zhang said.

In response to the Ukraine crisis, some European countries have further strengthened their defense capabilities, but they are still far from being able to protect themselves, she said.

Moreover, on issues such as the migrant flows into the region, it is difficult for them to make concerted efforts in these areas. And that means reduced autonomy, she said.

However, on matters such as the response to climate change, the EU still has its independence.

Ancient wisdom spreads

A reader leafs through a Maltese version of *The Analects of Confucius* on Wednesday. The edition was making its debut at the Malta Book Festival. ANDRES KUDACKI/ AP

WORLD

Unity govt hopes rest on Anwar

Appointment of political veteran as PM seen as helping to restore Malaysia stability

By **PRIME SARMIENTO** in Hong Kong
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Longtime Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was appointed as prime minister on Thursday, setting the stage for a "unity government" that could help restore stability to a nation beset by fractious politics over recent years.

Malaysia's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah consented to appoint Anwar after consultation with the country's Conference of Rulers. The monarch had to step in after general elections on Saturday ended in a hung parliament, with political parties failing to form the alliances needed to build the next government.

Anwar took his oath of office at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur.

Anwar, 75, has been described as Malaysia's longest prime minister-in-waiting. He was deputy prime minister in the 1990s and the official prime minister-in-waiting in 2018. Anwar leads the Pakatan Harapan, or PH, coalition, which captured 82 seats in the weekend elections. While PH emerged as the largest bloc in the parliament, it did not get the minimum number of 112 seats to form a government.

Oh Ei Sun, senior fellow with the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, said that while PH did not win a majority, it still managed to secure a plurality of seats in the parliament. But Oh said that Anwar's appointment is just the beginning of the long work ahead.

"A lot will depend on what sort of unity government that (Anwar) will build," he said. Oh cited the coalition's reform agenda and how the final composition of the next government would affect its enforcement.

Anwar Ibrahim speaks to reporters outside the National Palace after an audience with Malaysia's king in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday. FL WONG / AP

The agenda includes the need to reduce the cost of living, fight corruption, promote economic recovery and protect the environment.

'Raising confidence'

"Having Anwar Ibrahim as the prime minister augurs well for the economy and works to raise investor confidence," said Sivananthi Thanenthiran, executive director of the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, in Kuala Lumpur. She said that a commitment to a reform agenda is important for Malaysia to get back on track after suffering from the impact of the pandemic.

Sultan Abdullah on Tuesday summoned Anwar and Muhyiddin Yassin, a former prime minister and leader of the Perikatan Nasional, or PN, coalition. They were the leading candidates for prime minister as their respective coalition parties secured the most seats in the weekend elections, with PN winning 73 seats. Muhyiddin turned down the king's proposal for PN and PH to form a unity government.

The monarch on Wednesday granted an audience to the leaders of Barisan Nasional, or BN, the longest-ruling political coalition, and Gabungan Parti Sarawak. The United Malays National Organization, or UMNO, the dominant party in the BN coalition, issued a statement in which it said that it was willing to take part in a unity government "not led by Perikatan Nasional". UMNO and PN had a brief alliance in 2020 but this partnership fell apart in less than two years following infighting that forced Muhyiddin to resign as prime minister.

Anwar's appointment means "many people in the urban areas will be happy", said James Chin, professor of Asian Studies at the University of Tasmania in Australia. Chin was alluding to PH's bailiwick. But he noted that the survival of a PH-led government would depend on the actual composition of the coalition government.

Analysts said that it was the political bickering in the past that made it difficult for parties in this year's elections to agree to a coalition government. But Azmil Tayeb, senior lecturer at the School of Social Sciences at Universiti Sains Malaysia, believes that Anwar's appointment as prime minister will push other parties to coalesce around PH to form "a stable majority coalition".

"After all, it's more beneficial for other parties to be part of the government than outside of it," Azmil said.

One of the major criticisms leveled against PH is that it is a multiethnic coalition that does not appeal to the Malays — Malaysia's ethnic majority. But Azmil said PH commands around 10 percent of Malay votes and that having BN in the unity government "might help PH's image in the eyes of many conservative Malays".

Qatar's moment marred by barbs from the West

By **JAN YUMUL** in Hong Kong
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When Qatar kicked off the FIFA World Cup on Sunday, the spectacular opening ceremony in Doha had to compete for global attention with the yearslong criticism by the West of the Arab nation on issues such as alleged human rights abuses and, days out from the event, a ban on alcohol at the venues.

Many observers have called the barbs directed at the host nation — before and after the glittering ceremony — unacceptable, racist, and even Islamophobic. Over the years, Qatar had endured calls in Europe for a boycott of the World Cup on the supposed rights concerns. And as soccer's showpiece event approached, some major media outlets in the West intensified their negative coverage.

"The sentiment here in Qatar (is) there has been a gross level of hypocrisy and disingenuousness (in the West) about why Qatar has been granted this prestige of holding the FIFA World Cup," Farhan Mujahid Chak, associate professor of political science at Qatar University, told China Daily.

"Now, what's very jaded about that entire conversation is that it's almost as if there's an assumption that (Qatar) doesn't deserve it. And that's extremely unsettling for a lot of people," said Chak, adding that the "hypocrisy of Western countries" was becoming "blatant, racist, Islamophobic and absolutely unacceptable".

As part of the broad sweep of allegations of rights abuses, the country's critics have focused on what they said were the poor labor conditions for migrant workers involved in the construction of the tournament's stadiums and the host nation's divergent views on the LGBT community.

The sustained criticism has prompted some celebrities, business owners, and European countries to shun telecasts of the World Cup games, Britain's Daily Mail newspaper reported.

Gokhan Ereli, Gulf Studies coordinator at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, in Turkiye, said Qatar's hosting of the World Cup "introduces the country to the world in general" and "brings it to the fore in the Gulf and the Middle East".

Partners in the Gulf and the Middle East "should support this, and international actors should recognize this with respect", he told China Daily.

During a news conference on Saturday, FIFA President Gianni Infantino hit out at Qatar's critics, saying Europeans "should be apologizing for the next 3,000 years" to migrant workers "before starting to give moral lessons to people". He also characterized the "one-sided, moral lesson-giving" as "just hypocrisy".

Supporting reforms

The International Labour Organization said earlier this month that after a period of "intense negotiations", Qatar and the agency have agreed on a program to support major labor reforms.

"I think the FIFA president summed it all well with his latest statement. What seems to anger people in Qatar is a sense that there is a higher standard imposed on an Arab-Muslim country at this World Cup, (and is) considered to be either hypocritical or racist or both," Rasha Al Joundy, a Gulf expert at the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre in the United Arab Emirates, told China Daily.

Qatar is being denied its accomplishments in hosting the World Cup, according to Al Joundy.

"Even when Qatar allowed Israeli flights and declared that everyone is welcome, it was still criticized. Therefore it seems as if there is a rejection in some Western spheres and media outlets of a successful Qatari World Cup," she said.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, meanwhile, has hailed Qatar's hosting of the extravaganza and emphasized the role of sport in promoting peace, solidarity, social cohesion and socioeconomic development.

Briefly

TURKIYE

Attacks mounted in Iraq, Syria operation

Turkiye has launched air and ground attacks in northern Syria and northern Iraq, hitting 471 targets and neutralizing 254 "terrorists", Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said on Wednesday. "The operation continues with punishing fires carried out by air and ground fire support vehicles," Akar was quoted by the news outlet Anadolu Agency as saying. An aerial operation was mounted on Sunday against the Kurdish People's Protection Units in northern Syria and the Kurdistan Workers' Party in northern Iraq.

IRAN

IAEA officials to visit Teheran for talks

Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, or AEOI, announced on Wednesday that the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency and accompanying officials will travel to Teheran for talks. "Negotiations between Iran and the IAEA are still ongoing to reach a concrete and workable plan," Eslami told the official IRNA news agency. Referring to the recent start of uranium enrichment to the purity of 60 percent at the Fordow nuclear facility, Eslami said political pressures and extensive sanctions "have no effect".

EUROPE

Space agency gets first parastronaut

The European Space Agency made history on Wednesday by selecting an amputee who lost his leg in a motorcycle accident to be among its newest batch of astronauts — a leap toward its pioneering ambition to send someone with a physical disability into space. Briton John McFall, 41, who has been dubbed the first "parastronaut", lost his right leg at 19 and went on to compete in the Paralympics. He called his selection at Europe's answer to NASA "a real turning point and mark in history".

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Floating giants

Dino the dinosaur and friends wait in readiness on Wednesday for the following day's Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York.
ANDRES KUDACKI / AP

S. Korea in demographic crisis as birthrate falls

SEOUL — Back in the day, Yoo Young-yi's grandmother gave birth to six children. Her mother birthed two, and Yoo does not want any.

"My husband and I like babies so much … but there are things that we'd have to sacrifice if we raised kids," said Yoo, a 30-year-old financial company employee in Seoul. "So it's become a matter of choice between two things, and we've agreed to focus more on ourselves."

There are many like Yoo in South Korea who have chosen either not to have children or not to marry. Other advanced countries have similar trends, but South Korea's demographic crisis is much worse.

South Korea's statistics agency announced in September that the total fertility rate — the average number of babies born to each woman in their reproductive years — was 0.81 last year. That is the world's lowest for the third consecutive year.

The population shrank for the first time last year, stoking worry that a declining population could severely damage the economy — the world's 10th largest — because of labor shortages and greater welfare spending as the number of older people increases and the number of taxpayers shrinks.

Many young South Koreans say that, unlike their parents and grandparents, they do not feel an obligation to have a family. They cite the uncertainty of a bleak job market, expensive housing, gender and social inequality, low levels of social mobility and the huge expense of raising children in a brutally competitive society.

Choi Yoon-kyung, an expert at the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, said many people who fail to enter good schools and land decent jobs feel they have become "dropouts" who "cannot be happy" even if they marry and have children because South Korea lacks advanced social safety nets.

United Nations figures show a South Korean woman gave birth to about four to six children in the 1950s and 1960s on average, three to four in the 1970s, and less than two in the mid-1980s.

South Korea has been offering a variety of incentives and other support programs for those who give birth to many children.

But Choi said the fertility rate has been falling too fast to see any tangible effects. During a government task force meeting last month, officials said they would soon formulate comprehensive measures to cope with demographic challenges.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Wuxi's role as IoT powerhouse emphasized in exposition

Global technological event focuses on shared ecosystem, transformation

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The 2022 World Internet of Things Exposition held from Nov 25 to 27 in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, aims to boost the digital economy and explore the future development path of the worldwide IoT industry.

As a technological treasure with diverse exhibitions and a series of activities, this year's expo, which is conducted in an online and offline combined model, highlights branding and service.

Taking into account the multidimensional collaboration of "conferences, exhibitions, competitions, applications, and evaluations", the expo builds an IoT innovation system from the aspects of open source ecology, technology incubation, application paradigms and data.

The expo attracts thousands of guests including government leaders, domestic and foreign academicians and industrial leaders.

Since it was approved in 2016, the World Internet of Things Expo has been held for six sessions, with more than 50 countries and regions participating in the event.

The number of participants has exceeded 1.1 million and nearly 800 major contracted projects have been signed with a total investment of more than 200 billion yuan ($28 billion). The expo has become the most well-known and influential professional event in the global field of IoT.

In 2009, the State Council approved the construction of a national sensor network innovation demonstration zone in Wuxi.

Taking this as an opportunity, Jiangsu insists on self-reliance in science and technology, accelerates the integration of new-generation information technologies such as the IoT and 5G with manufacturing, and strives to improve the level of digital, networked, and intelligent development of the manufacturing industry.

To build an open, collaborative, and shared IoT ecosystem, the province has significantly improved the overall level of the local IoT industry, and it has effectively promoted the high-quality development of Jiangsu's manufacturing industry to be at the forefront of the country.

In 2021, Jiangsu's IoT industry achieved a business revenue of 742 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of about 15 percent, covering a complete upstream and downstream industrial chain such as "sensing, connection, platform, application, and security". Its industrial scale maintains a leading position in the country.

After years of development, IoT has become Wuxi's industrial landmark and business card. The city adopts the model of "using applications to drive industry and boost the high-quality development of the digital economy.

The digital economy in Wuxi has entered a new stage. IoT has become an important engine to promote the deep integration of the digital economy and the real economy.

Since the beginning of this year, Wuxi has put forward a development plan on IoT during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25).

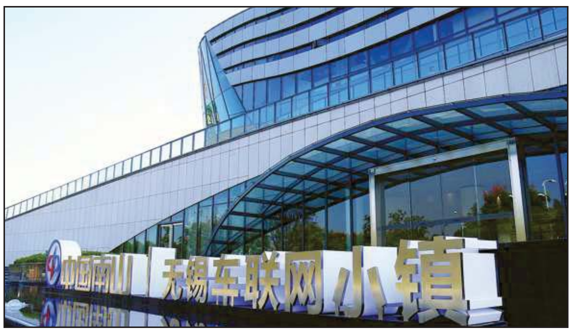
In the next step, Wuxi will rely on its own advantages to innovate "artificial intelligence plus IoT"; focus for smart sensors and industrial internet; continue to deepen the subdivisions of sensing equipment, intelligent hardware, communication transmission, network operation and application services, develop end products and solutions that integrate software and hardware, cloud-side collaboration, and ubiquitous intelligent connection; and deepen the development in circulation.

The city will promote technologies in the fields of transportation, public safety, medical health and elderly care, optimize the "one core and multiple" industrial layout, strengthen the subdivided industrial chains such as intelligent sensing and create a better environment to accelerate the growth of leading enterprises.

It will also accelerate the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, build the national sensor network innovation demonstration zone at a higher level, and make Wuxi into a world-class advanced manufacturing cluster of IoT.

Clockwise from top: Participants attend the 2021 World Internet of Things Exposition held in Wuxi, Jiangsu province. Visitors watch a model spacecraft during the expo in 2021. A woman tries out a virtual reality facility to experience skiing at the expo in 2021. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Visitors at the exhibition hall of the Wuxi Internet of Vehicles Town.



The Wuxi Internet of Vehicles Town has gathered headquarters and offices of 46 industrial leaders and innovation companies. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Internet of vehicles flourishing in city

By HAO NAN
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Wuxi in East China's Jiangsu province is in the media spotlight by hosting the 2022 World Internet of Things Exposition.

Kicking off on Friday, the three-day event has attracted about 1,000 participants, including experts and industry leaders from home and abroad. Fortune Global 500 enterprises and unicorn companies are showcasing their core technologies and innovations, and have released their new products during the exhibition.

For example, an L4 grey-blue unmanned minibus developed by Wuxi high-tech companies is to make its debut during the meeting. L4 or level 4 autonomous vehicles can drive almost all the time without human control.

The bus has only two rows of seats and one table, without driver's seat, steering wheel, throttle or brake. It can run at a maximum speed of 40 kilometers per hour.

It can be driven safely and efficiently under a variety of urban traffic conditions. It can achieve stable and green autonomous driving on open roads, expressways, tunnels, traffic jams, rainy and snowy days.

Wuxi, which is famous for the development of the IoT sector, has been speeding up the formation of an internet of vehicles industrial chain over the past few years. IoV is not only an important part of the IoT industrial cluster, but also serves as a crucial link in the construction of a digital Wuxi, officials said.

In 2018, the city launched the first phase of a C-V2X city-level demonstration and application project, and established the national intelligent transportation testing base.

C-V2X, or cellular vehicle-to-everything, refers to a technology that allows vehicles to communicate with the environment around them in real time. It is considered an important supplement to vehicle sensors that enables vehicles, stoplights, traffic signs, cyclists and pedestrian devices to share information about their status, location and next moves.

So far, more than 200,000 users have registered in the system of the C-V2X project in Wuxi. The real-time data enables the system to map the real world into the digital world, and its interface is divided into two areas of statistics and platforms of facilities, data and applications.

The statistics area provides unified operation, maintenance and management of roadside equipment and intelligent-connected vehicles, sharing information for different application platforms via multisource data and analysis.

Wuxi started construction of Nanshan IoV Town, the first of its kind in China, in Xishan district in 2019. The town covers an area of 59 hectares with a total investment of about 12 billion yuan ($1.68 billion).

The first phase of the town finished construction and opened in August.

With an investment of 2.8 billion yuan, it has built an industrial base, a data operation and management center, an exhibition center and a number of high-end technology and urban application scenarios in the sector.

The second phase plans to cover an area of 17 hectares and has a total investment of nearly 5.5 billion yuan. It will focus on the industrialization of IoV high-end equipment and intelligent software companies, and considers the testing requirements of autonomous driving enterprises into its design.

The third phase is scheduled to be established in 2024, and will highlight the research and production of IoV-related enterprises, as well as commercial services themed on automobile culture.

Currently, the IoV town has gathered headquarters and offices of 46 industrial leaders and innovation companies. They include overall solution providers such as Datang Gaohong and Nebula-Link, vehicle testers, multi-access edge computing software and hardware providers like Juefx and MIIVII Technology, and data service providers such as Wisoft Information Technology and Neusoft.

The China Academy of Information and Communications Technology signed a contract with the Xishan government in 2021 to set up a joint laboratory in the field of IoV and intelligent transportation in the district. The lab will serve as a public service platform nationwide when it is completed.

In the same year, Wuxi became one of the first pilot cities for the coordinated development of national smart city infrastructure and intelligent-connected vehicles.

Intelligent digital platforms boost long-term development

By YUAN SHENGGAO

On a 112-square-meter LED screen, information on Wuxi's economy, social governance, ecological environment and public services passes by.

The intelligent platform in the city's operation and management center hall has collected video resources from emergency, public security and transportation authorities and about 21.68 billion pieces of data from 45 departments.

Since the "digital Wuxi" construction and development plan was released in 2002, the city has formulated city-level public data management measures.

Key industries of Wuxi's digital economy exceeded 600 billion yuan ($83.82 billion) in 2021.

The Wuxi big data management bureau was founded in 2019. It is responsible for tasks such as the implementation of national big data strategies and planning of the city's digital transformation.

The region systematically and mechanically prepared for the significant digital change more than three years ago. Its Liangxi district also set up a big data management bureau in 2019.

The Wuxi public data management measures document was carried out in 2020.

This year, the city established a leading team for digital economy acceleration and digital transformation. It comprises six groups of digital economy, governance, government affairs, life, ecology and infrastructure.

Revenue of companies above designated size from Wuxi's key digital economic industries rose 16 percent year-on-year in 2021. The city reached all-around strategic cooperation with companies such as Tencent, Huawei and JD and tried to attract others including ByteDance and iFlytek to develop business in Wuxi that year.

The city is boosting both its real and digital economy. Eleven companies have been evaluated as provincial-level intelligent manufacturing model factories since the beginning of this year, ranking first in Jiangsu province, where Wuxi is seated, with Suzhou and Changzhou cities.

Wuxi plans to integrate the real and digital economy and build itself into an intelligent manufacturing pilot area during the next three years. This year, the city aims to build 4,100 5G base stations and foster one to two companies worth more than 10 billion yuan from the digital sector.

An application with a rhinoceros icon opened the door to digital life for local residents in Wuxi in 2020. The application, called Lingxi, has offered 840-plus service affairs involving pandemic prevention and control, healthcare and transportation.

To date, more than 12.7 million people have used their real full names to register on the application. The daily maximum of its active users surpassed 7 million.

A big data transaction company began to operate in Wuxi on March 28.

The city established a comprehensive data trade platform to gather data supply and demand parties and professional service providers.

Wuxi has stepped up the city's promotion regulations for digital transformation and the release of related systems involving data resource governance, operation of new digital infrastructure, data ethics and cybersecurity guarantee.

The city's big data management bureau has organized the Jiangsu big data development and application competitions for three consecutive years.

Data security is the bottom line of the digital economy, local media reported. The city is developing its urban big data center security system that covers the life cycle of data.

It is also advancing growth of organizations such as Wuxi Big Data and the Wuxi Institute of Digital Economy.

From left: The Internet of Things Research and Development Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences is located in Wuxi, Jiangsu province. The National Intelligent Traffic Integrated Testing Facility. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

This page is sponsored by the organizing committee of the World Internet of Things Exposition.

RIGHT TRACK

Possible RRR cut seen giving economy help

Monetary tool to be used when needed to keep liquidity reasonably ample

By JIANG XUEQING
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China signaled a likely reduction in the reserve requirement ratio for banks to enhance their ability to expand credit for the purpose of supporting economic recovery and stabilizing market confidence, experts said.

Monetary policy tools such as RRR cuts could be used when needed and as appropriate to keep liquidity reasonably ample, according to the decision made at a State Council executive meeting on Tuesday. The State Council is the nation's Cabinet.

The decision was triggered by several factors, including the economic recovery pressure China is facing due to sporadic outbreaks of COVID-19, the narrowing of banks' net interest margins, and demand for long-term liquidity to stabilize the housing market, said Lou Feipeng, a senior economist at Postal Savings Bank of China.

Lou said the People's Bank of China, the central bank, may cut the RRR for all banks by 0.25 percentage points. The reduction in the cash amount banks must hold in reserve is expected to free up about 550 billion yuan ($77 billion) in long-term liquidity.

"Using RRR cuts, China will not only encourage banks to step up support for the real economy, but also lower their borrowing costs, thus helping banks to surrender part of their profits to support the real economy. The long-term funds freed by the reduction is also conducive for banks to provide long-term financing for the economy," he said.

Wang Yunjin, senior researcher at the Zhixin Investment Research Institute, said COVID-19 cases have resurged in a number of Chinese cities this month, and this has affected the recovery of the real economy to some extent.

"As demand is still insufficient and market sentiment is unstable, it is necessary for China to take measures like cutting the RRR to send a positive signal for the economy, boost financial market confidence, maintain market stability, and create a favorable financial environment for economic stabilization and recovery," Wang said.

Currently, market liquidity has marginally tightened and needs to be further loosened. The country expedited issuances of local government special bonds in October and November. With the accelerated implementation of infrastructure investment projects, demand for supporting financing will increase. In addition, the loosening of a series of real estate policies also signifies that the banking system needs to maintain sufficient liquidity, he said.

Considering that major developed countries are still raising their interest rates, there is relatively little room for China to push for a decrease in market interest rates by cutting policy rates. Therefore, lowering the RRR is a more suitable choice among monetary policy instruments, compared with policy rate moves, he said.

The PBOC cut the RRR for financial institutions by 0.25 percentage points on April 25, except for financial institutions that have already implemented a 5 percent RRR.

At the end of September, the gap between the balance of bank deposits and the balance of bank loans noticeably widened compared with that at the end of last year, said a PBOC report. Moreover, net interest margins of commercial banks have narrowed significantly since China cut its one-year loan prime rate, the benchmark lending rate, in December 2021. These factors led to a slowdown in banks' profit growth, said Chang Huili, an analyst at Huatai Securities, in a report.

An RRR cut will contribute to the reduction of banks' borrowing costs. The move is conducive to improving banks' credit expansion capability and increasing their willingness to do so, Chang said.

A residential project model on display during an industry expo in Nanchang, Jiangxi province.
ZHANG HAIYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Latest policy push lifts real estate stocks, expands funding options

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Equities of real estate developers listed on the A-share market gained almost 2 percent on average on Thursday, following Wednesday's announcement of multiple supportive policies to stabilize the lackluster property market.

Property shares thus ducked the marketwide downtrend that lowered the Shanghai Composite Index by 0.25 percent on Thursday.

People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, and the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, jointly released 16 financial policies Wednesday night to facilitate the stable and healthy development of the Chinese property market.

Provision of loans to property developers in a stable manner, support for individuals' reasonable mortgage demand, stable credit release to construction companies, reasonable extensions for existing loans, stable bond issuances from real estate companies, support for policy banks to provide special funds to unfinished projects figure among the policy proposals.

Zhang Dawei, chief analyst at Centaline Property Agency Ltd, said the 16 policies will influence some properties' financing to a large extent, benefiting and stabilizing the overall property market.

The actual effect will largely depend on how banks and financial institutions implement the policies. Similarly, the rebound of the Chinese property market will depend on the recovery of homebuyer confidence.

Positive messages were released during a State Council executive meeting on Tuesday. The meeting stressed that policies supporting homebuyers' rigid demand or improving housing demand should be implemented based on the situation of different cities.

Special funds earmarked for unfinished projects should be granted to specific projects as soon as possible. Commercial banks should issue new loans to unfinished projects so that the projects can be built and delivered more rapidly, the meeting said.

Major State-owned commercial banks are moving in that direction. Bank of China signed strategic cooperation agreements with China Vanke on Wednesday to provide the Shenzhen-based property developer a maximum 100 billion yuan ($14 billion) credit quota.

Bank of Communications has entered into comprehensive cooperation agreements with China Vanke and Midea Real Estate Holding to provide 100 billion and 20 billion yuan of comprehensive credit to the two property developers respectively.

Agricultural Bank of China inked strategic cooperation agreements with five real estate companies including CR Land and Longfor Group to build long-term partnerships with the latter two in terms of property development loans, housing mortgage, loans for mergers, bond underwriting and investment.

Liu Shui, a researcher from the China Index Academy, said more similar agreements will be reached between banks and property developers to provide more loans. Given the fact that real estate investment dropped 8.8 percent year-on-year in the first 10 months, more loans provided to property developers will help consolidate the foundation for macroeconomic recovery.

The latest data from the National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors showed that China Bond Insurance Co Ltd will support Longfor Group, Midea Real Estate Holding and Radiance Group in their issuance of mid-term notes valued at 2 billion yuan, 1.5 billion yuan and 1.2 billion yuan, respectively.

Bond issuances will be more commonly used by property developers to seek financing and inject more market liquidity. A firewall will be built between the property developers facing default problems and the healthy ones. Market expectations will thus improve, said Liu.

China eyes better trade ties with US, LatAm

By LIU ZHIHUA
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China said it hopes the United States will join its efforts to promote the early return of bilateral economic and trade cooperation to a normal and healthy development track, Shu Jueting, spokeswoman of the Ministry of Commerce, said during an online news conference in Beijing on Thursday.

Asked about the details of the Nov 18 meeting between Chinese Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai in Bangkok during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting, Shu said, "Their talks were candid, professional and constructive."

The two sides discussed issues of mutual concern, including economy and trade, as well as multilateral and regional economic and trade cooperation, during the meeting, she added.

18 percent
year-on-year growth of China's imports from Cuba in the first three quarters of this year

The two sides have agreed to keep communication lines open between them. The Chinese side believes face-to-face communication will facilitate deeper understanding and closer coordination, Shu said.

At the Bangkok meeting, Wang said that China and the US should respect each other, seek common ground while reserving differences, carry out constructive cooperation, and find a way based on mutual trust to solve problems, she said.

The Chinese minister expressed serious concerns over Taiwan-related issues and US restrictions targeting China on trade and investment. He also suggested the two sides should consider keeping an open mind on all regional economic cooperation initiatives that promote solidarity and cooperation.

Besides, while telling the US counterpart of the recent 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Wang stressed that China will follow the Chinese path to modernization, adhere to the policy of opening-up, keep improving the business environment, and remain committed to peaceful development, Shu said.

Experts said improvement in China-US trade and investment cooperation will further unleash technology and trade potential and bolster global economic growth.

Shu said economic and trade cooperation between China and Latin American countries has not only fully recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but now exceeds pre-pandemic levels, showing strong resilience and sound growth momentum.

Economic and trade relations are "the ballast stone" and "stabilizer" of the relationships between China and Latin American countries, and the two sides have strong economic complementarity and cooperation potential, she said.

Commerce Ministry data showed 21 countries in the region have signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with China, and multiple cooperation achievements have been made in sectors like trade, investment and project contracting.

Bilateral trade between China and Cuba, the first Latin American and Caribbean country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, surged 7.2 percent year-on-year in 2021.

During the first three quarters of this year, China's imports from Cuba increased 18 percent year-on-year.

Briefly

Intercity railway hastens construction

East China's Anhui and Jiangsu provinces are speeding up the building of a 54.23-kilometer commuter rail line to better link the two provinces amid integration of the Yangtze River Delta region. The Nanjing-Maanshan Intercity Railway will help slash travel between Nanjing, Jiangsu's provincial capital, and Maanshan in Anhui, to 30 minutes upon beginning operations in 2025. With 20 stations and partially being built by China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd, construction on the line began in December 2020. On Wednesday, a construction campaign was launched in Maanshan to hasten its completion.

Investment up in roadway transport

China's fixed-asset investment in road and waterway transport systems maintained steady growth from January to October, official data showed. Investments reached nearly 2.47 trillion yuan ($345 billion) in the first 10 months, up 9.5 percent year-on-year, said the Ministry of Transport. Road transport investment reached 2.34 trillion yuan, up 9.6 percent. Inland waterway investment rose 9.2 percent to 63.4 billion yuan.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

AIIB keen to fund net-zero shift in creative ways

By ZHOU LANXU
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The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is seeking creative ways to finance the net-zero transition of developing economies — a crucial task considering the headwinds of climate change and rising debt levels of such economies, the bank's chief economist said.

While the issue of rising debt levels has caused short-term problems in some countries like Sri Lanka and Pakistan, it should be noted that a long-term concern has also emerged, said Erik Berglof, chief economist of the AIIB.

Having a high debt level could restrict developing economies' ability to invest in the net-zero transition and future economic growth, which could render them less prepared for climate change, Berglof said in an exclusive interview with China Daily recently.

"We need to become more creative in addressing that very serious issue of high debt levels," Berglof said.

One innovative way of financing the net-zero transition despite rising debt levels could be lending programs that incentivize developing economies' green efforts. Such lending programs, for instance, should allow them to borrow more cheaply if they contribute to carbon emissions reduction or biodiversity preservation, Berglof said.

The AIIB will continue to firmly support developing economies in building the conditions for the net-zero transition and long-term economic growth, Berglof said. The development bank would also help cushion the short-term blows from debt issues and challenging economic conditions.

Erik Berglof

The AIIB is now known for extending $2.9 billion, or 48 percent of the total financing approvals last year, to the field of climate finance.

In the Asian Infrastructure Finance 2022 report, the AIIB pointed out that emerging and developing economies are at risk of being left behind by the net-zero transition, unless urgent action is taken to build public sector's capacity in conjunction with the private sector.

Accelerating the net-zero transition in developing economies is not only critical for avoiding a climate disaster but would catalyze reforms beneficial for their long-term growth and help them buffer external shocks like global inflation, Berglof said.

"All the things that you need to do for the green transition are things that you should do to also promote growth," Berglof said, stressing that the reforms to make the public sector more efficient in green innovation will also drive innovation across the board.

The headquarters of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in Beijing. WANG PEIYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Also, building an energy structure heavy with renewables will help developing economies reduce reliance on energy imports. This would mean greater economic resilience against the rising challenges of high global energy prices and monetary tightening led by developed economies, he said.

"When we look at supporting countries, we of course have to take into account the impact on our own credit rating," he said. "But I think luckily the AIIB is very well capitalized and we have the capacity."

With rating agencies Fitch, Moody's and S&P having all reaffirmed the AIIB's AAA rating, the bank had very few nonperforming loans as at the end of last year, the bank said in its 2021 annual report.

Berglof said China's experience in pushing green development can inform other developing economies as the country has made its carbon reduction goals clear to stakeholders and got every government department concerned involved in the pursuit of the goals.

China stands out among developing countries for its "exceptional high contribution" to innovation in the green space, for helping bring down the costs of wind and solar power, and for taking part in keeping the international flow of green technologies open, Berglof said.

Online
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BUSINESS

Xinjiang to further tap renewables

Autonomous region transforms advantages in clean resources into economic momentum

By ZHENG XIN
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State Grid employees check equipment at a power station in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region on Nov 9. SONG RONGXIN / XINHUA

The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region vows to further tap the potential of its vast renewable energy resources to ensure sufficient power supply in the country while transforming its local resources advantage into an economic advantage.

The region has transmitted more than 103.6 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity to other parts of the country during the first 10 months, up 1.43 percent year-on-year, according to State Grid Xinjiang Electric Power Co Ltd.

Rich in solar, wind and hydropower resources, the region saw power generated by renewable energy reach 29.66 billion kWh, up 10.26 percent year-on-year. It accounts for more than 30 percent of its total power transmitted to other parts of the country during the first three quarters, said the Xinjiang branch of State Grid Corp of China, the country's largest State-owned utility company.

The corporation has also been accelerating domestic grid network construction this year with a focus on ultrahigh-voltage power transmission networks, an attempt to further ensure power supply stability and boost green power consumption in the country.

The company said earlier that it invested 473 billion yuan ($66.24 billion) last year in grid network infrastructure after investing 460.5 billion yuan in 2020. In all, it plans to invest 2.23 trillion yuan in grid network construction during the 2021-25 period.

The corporation also plans to kick off 13 ultrahigh-voltage lines this year as part of the company's five-year plan to upgrade its domestic grid network, comprising 38 ultrahigh-voltage lines with a total investment of 380 billion yuan and covering more than 30,000 kilometers.

Boosted by the strong support of the grid network and flexible power trade, the energy industry in Xinjiang has been thriving in recent years. The newly installed capacity of the Xinjiang power grid during the first nine months has exceeded 3.04 million kilowatts, including 771,900 kW of wind power, 549,100 kW of solar power and 234,000 kW of hydropower, said the Xinjiang branch.

> "Chances are high that more green power will be transmitted ... as green power in China's solar and wind-rich regions is expected to increase on a large scale in the future."
>
> **Luo Zuoxian,** head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute

The region's installed capacity rose to 110.98 million kW by the end of September, up 5.31 percent compared with the same period the previous year. The installed capacity of new energy rose to 38.17 million kW, accounting for 34.39 of the region's total installed capacity, ranking fifth nationwide, it said.

With abundant wind and solar resources, Xinjiang has been a pioneer in using new energy with a surge in electricity generated from clean energy in recent years. It laid out 188 renewable energy projects by September, with a total installed capacity of 58.72 million kW. The region currently transmits electricity to 20 other Chinese provincial regions.

An analyst said the clean power from Xinjiang has ensured the power supply in the country during the first three quarters, especially during the summer when electricity demand is high.

Luo Zuoxian, head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute, said, "Chances are high that more green power will be transmitted and the technology of ultra-high voltage power transmission will play a key role, as green power in China's solar and wind-rich regions is expected to increase on a large scale in the future."

"Long-distance power transmission plays a key role in the country in securing sufficient power supply as supply and demand in China are not evenly distributed," he said.

Total reserves of wind energy resources in Xinjiang are estimated at around 890 million kW and the exploitable amount of wind energy resources accounts for 15.4 percent of the country's total. The exploitable amount of solar energy resources accounts for 40 percent of the country's total, ranking tops worldwide, said local authorities.

Special bonds key to shoring up economy

By ZHANG YUE
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Special local government bonds, particularly those with recent early issuance in some provinces, are playing an increasingly important role in stabilizing China's overall growth and improving growth quality this year, experts said.

The finance department of Fujian province announced earlier this month that on Nov 1, the Ministry of Finance issued the province's balance quota of special-purpose bonds worth 103.4 billion yuan ($14.48 billion) for 2023 ahead of schedule, an increase of 33.9 percent over the previous year.

Funds released from these newly issued bonds will be used to support the construction of key projects in transportation, infrastructure, new energy projects and new infrastructure, according to its statement.

In a similar vein, a number of provincial-level governments are also advancing preparation work for projects eligible to apply for special local government bonds for the coming year, indicating that the role of such bonds in catalyzing investments will be brought into full play.

The timing of the issuance of the special local government bond quota for the following year comes earlier this year and the scale has increased, said Gao Ruidong, chief economist at Everbright Securities, adding that in previous years, early issuance of the following year's bond quota usually comes around December. Gao estimates, based on the special bond quota received by Fujian province, that the total amount of special bonds that will be issued ahead of schedule may come in at around 2 trillion yuan.

These moves of early issuance came months after the executive meeting of the State Council urged in August that the balance of the special-purpose bond quota worth over 500 billion yuan should be well utilized under law and issued by the end of October, hoping that this will help boost effective investment, spur consumption and address the problem of insufficient loan demand.

"With Fujian announcing the precise time and quota of such early issuance of bonds, this means that special local government bonds will play an increasingly integral role in stabilizing growth," Gao said.

He said that the early issuance of special local government bonds will help stabilize the economy in the first half of 2023.

"Compared with last year and also 2020, the early issuance of these bonds indicates the consistency of fiscal policy. It also helps local governments with project reserves so that special bonds can be issued and put into use at an earlier time in 2023," he said.

In the fourth quarter and into next year, special local government bonds will actively energize growth in areas such as new infrastructure, Gao said.

China's Ministry of Finance said in an announcement on Nov 5 that in the first nine months, special local government bonds worth over 3.54 trillion yuan have been issued. During the January-September period, local government bonds were issued at an average interest rate of 3.03 percent.

By the end of September, China's outstanding local government debts stood at around 34.71 trillion yuan, within the official limit of 37.65 trillion yuan for this year, the ministry said.

Li Keaobo, deputy director of the Tsinghua University Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking, said that this year, the role of these special bonds has been indispensable compared with the previous two years, as a slump in property sales, as well as tax and fee cuts in supporting businesses, have brought certain pressure for local governments.

Experts, insiders bullish on prospects of metaverse

By ZHENG YIRAN
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Thanks to a huge netizen base, powerful 5G network and advanced manufacturing capability, China's metaverse market is forecast to embrace a bright future, industry insiders said.

Yu Chen, managing director and partner at Boston Consulting Group and also a core member of the firm's technology, media and telecommunications practice, said, "With key technological breakthroughs, some third-party institutions estimate that the industry in China will reach 200 billion yuan ($28 billion) in five years."

Currently, the market scale of China's metaverse industry is around 40 billion yuan, according to the Annual Report on Metaverse Development in China 2022, which was published by the Social Sciences Academic Press.

Yu, holding a positive attitude toward the industry, said, "In the coming five years, the development of the metaverse in China is comparable to that of smartphones during the past decades."

Yu Jianing, executive director of the metaverse industry committee at the China Mobile Communications Association, said: "During the last round of development of China's mobile internet, a multitude of excellent technology companies emerged. They had accumulated vast resources and experience in scientific innovation, which serve as key elements for driving China's metaverse development."

"Along Chinese enterprises' development path, specifically, there are some niche tracks worth being invested in," Yu from BCG said.

Yu from BCG noted that based on the construction framework, the target investment track of China's metaverse market is mainly composed of technology components, interaction portals and content.

"Interaction portals of the metaverse are the media that transmit the virtual experience to users. They often appear in the forms of extended reality equipment such as augmented reality and virtual reality equipment."

According to BCG's report, as early as 2012, Google launched its XR head mount display Google Glass. Numerous manufacturers followed the lead and acquired XR equipment production capability.

As the concept of the metaverse went viral, a boost in XR equipment development appeared in 2021. Between 2018 and 2020, annual global shipments of XR equipment were around 5.5 million units to 6 million units. However, in 2021, the figure jumped to 11.2 million units, nearly doubling the level of the previous year. Shipment value reached $5 billion, data from BCG showed.

"The climax to the investment in China's XR equipment sector came in 2021 also, with a total of 107 deals of financing. The total investment was 28.1 billion yuan, up 208.8 percent year-on-year," said BCG's report.

Yu from BCG said: "XR equipment research and development and manufacturing is a current investment hot spot in China, as certain technical bottlenecks weren't resolved. For example, AR equipment and VR equipment are still big and heavy and not comfortable enough for consumers to wear. The optical projection module in VR equipment still causes dizziness during long-term wear.

"Both startup businesses and major technology companies in China are striving to break the technical barriers, generating an investment hot spot in the XR equipment sector."

Visitors interact with a virtual character at a booth promoting the metaverse during a high-tech expo in Beijing in July.
CHEN XIAOGEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

> "Along Chinese enterprises' development path, specifically, there are some niche tracks worth being invested in."
>
> **Yu Chen,** managing director and partner at Boston Consulting Group

Rokid Inc, a Hangzhou, Zhejiang province-based high-tech company, is among the first batch of Chinese technology companies to start research and development of XR equipment. In 2016, Rokid's R-Lab was founded, focusing on optical image recognition and AR technology R&D. In 2018, its AR glasses — Rokid Glass — were released, being the first mass-produced AR glasses in China.

Misa Zhu, founder and CEO of Rokid, said that most of the investment the company attracted was injected into R&D, as it has been striving to produce AR glasses that are light, comfortable and attractive to make consumers want to wear the glasses for extended periods.

The weight of the latest version of Rokid's AR glasses, Rokid Air, is 83 grams — quite an impressive result in the industry. Zhu said that to cut down the weight of the product, the company worked hard on the design and optimized the space inside the AR glasses.

The recent Nov 11 shopping festival testified to the success of Rokid Air. Data from the company showed that during the shopping festival, over 10,000 units of Rokid Air were sold.

Yu from BCG said: "The development of 2B scenarios is also worth investing in as enterprises are looking for industrial solutions that take advantage of the metaverse."

"For example, medical companies are considering using VR technology to preplan and rehearse a surgery; while airline companies wish to use the metaverse to train their pilots."

Speaking of the future development of China's metaverse, Yu from BCG suggested that apart from breaking technical barriers, policy guidelines and industry standardization from laws and regulations are needed.

"Chinese technology companies will take the route of designing technology at the bottom level differently from the rest of the world. Using their own advantages, they should accelerate their pace, effectively break down technical bottlenecks and mass produce cost-effective XR equipment to capture market opportunities," he added.

Zhu from Rokid, said: "There is still a long way to go. Currently, XR glasses can only be applied in specific scenarios. To equip them with full capabilities will be highly demanding in the technical process, production capability and materials, including semiconductors."

When asked about whether or not the company is worried about "bottleneck" problems in chips, he said: "We are taking a localized route, cutting the risks of relying on advanced imported materials. So far, we haven't encountered 'bottleneck' problems. In the long run, we expect the overall environment to improve. Let's give it a little time and confidence."

Chen Jia, an independent researcher in international strategy, said, "The past months have witnessed the bumpy development of the metaverse industry globally. Compared with the rest of the world, the market in China has achieved the most development, especially policy-wise."

In 2022, the governments of Beijing and Shanghai, and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shandong and Fujian launched guidelines and action plans for metaverse sector.

"With the central and local governments vigorously promoting the industry, enterprises actively participating and consumers' knowledge about the metaverse deepening, the market is expected to embrace exponential growth," said Hong Yong, associate research fellow of the e-commerce research department under the Ministry of Commerce.

BUSINESSFOCUS

Consumers keen to buy stationery

Eye-catching new items, stores drive up sales, but product prices also on the rise

Above: Consumers check out stationery products at a store in Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, in February. CAO JIANXIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Left: Stationery products sold in blind boxes are displayed at a supermarket in Tianjin in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By LIU YUKUN
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Liu Yang of Beijing said she was shocked when she saw the prices of the products at a stationery store that her daughter wanted to visit.

"I thought a pencil would just cost a few yuan, but the ones there were sold for 30 yuan ($4.19). I understand the idea of robotic vacuums to clean desks, but electric erasers? Is it necessary to have an electric appliance to do something as small as erasing a word?"

But Liu said there were many even pricier items.

Her daughter picked out a pen that can display presentations, a ballpoint pen with a small fan on top and a journal that people can write in to relieve stress. The journal also has a plastic pig figure on its cover that can be pinched for more stress relief. That — and other somewhat extravagant items that Liu had never heard of — cost her nearly 300 yuan.

Liu is not the only parent whose budget is feeling the effects of increasingly expensive stationery and related items. Social media platforms said "toys or stationery" and "high-priced stationery" have become popular searches.

Recently, Weibo and short-video platform Douyin reported discussions trending on such topics as "gel pen sells for 55 yuan" and "why stationery is getting more and more expensive".

Many stationery stores set aside special back-to-school sections that sell items with promotional labels such as "necessary for students" and "recommended by teachers".

While including some basic academic tools, best-sellers include items with such embellishments as those that display cartoons or that are embedded with dolls. Some items are co-branded with well-known intellectual properties, such as the Japanese manga series One Piece, with prices ranging from dozens to hundreds of yuan per item.

"My daughter and her friends also long for imported items or those labeled as having a limited supply," Liu said.

Also, the rising popularity of blind boxes, which are sold without the customer knowing the contents until they buy it, has led to some stationery merchants selling their own blind boxes.

"The extra step of having to guess what you'll get can increase the total cost by 50 yuan or more for almost the exact same items," she complained.

Market experts say stationery merchants are seeking ways to pry money out of parents' pockets as the market has boomed in recent years.

The Chinese market for stationery and related items stood at 163.89 billion yuan in 2020, according to Beijing-based Intelligence Research Group. About 300 million students and 100 million office workers are the most important consumers in the market, it said.

The growing market has attracted numerous businesses. There are over 7.04 million stationery-related companies in China, according to Tianyancha, a corporate information-sharing site. Of those, more than 5.66 million have been established within the past five years — over 80 percent of the total.

Last year alone, more than 2.14 million new enterprises were registered, and the annual registration growth rate reached 39.35 percent, the highest in history, according to Tianyancha.

Wang Yiran, a stationery store owner in Huilongguan community in Beijing's Changping district, said more and more customers are focused on products instead of prices.

"They'd rather pay double or even triple the price for pens with their beloved virtual characters, or imported items, with those from Japan being particularly popular. Middle school students are more likely than elementary students to have such preferences.

"Many customers think Japanese stationery and related items are well-designed in appearance and function. For instance, there are Japanese pens specially designed for left-handers, and Japanese ballpoint pens that last longer," Wang said.

Posts on lifestyle site Xiaohongshu related to imported Japanese stationery have surpassed 40,000. Posts that mention Japanese company Pilot, best known for its writing instruments but which also makes stationery and jewelry, had reached more than 120,000 as of mid-September.

On user-review site Douban, fans created an online club called the "House of Japanese Stationery". On Douyin, a collection of episodes featuring Japanese stationery and related items had nearly 1 million views as of mid-September.

Domestic brands are also stepping up efforts to develop high-end products with additional functions and features such as stress-relief journals, as well as improving product appearance and increasing brand value through cooperation with well-known IPs.

Jiumu, a high-end product line of domestic brand Shanghai M&G Stationery Inc, recorded revenue of 950 million yuan last year, a year-on-year increase of 70 percent despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jiumu has developed chain stores with decor and product selections that are more elaborate in function and appearance, more creative and with more cooperation with well-known IPs. The goal is to better attract consumers who frequently buy stationery and related products and who are willing to pay more, the company said.

M&G said in its financial report that the rapid development of Jiumu is an important driving force in M&G's revenue growth, which hit 34 percent year-on-year in 2021. It said the industry is facing challenges as well as opportunities presented by the growing demand for individualized products and services, as people born after 2000 become the most important customer base. It said the industry's revenue growth will be driven by high-end products with better design and quality.

M&G told People's Daily that the company plans for Jiumu to create a more appealing atmosphere at its stores to draw customers in and motivate them to stay longer. "Further efforts to improve consumers' shopping experience are key to generating new growth points for retail stationery," it said.

Jiumu had 463 stores across the country by the end of last year.

Experts also say the market as a whole would be well served to pay close attention to what customers are saying.

"I wouldn't mind paying more for better product quality, but are some functions really necessary?" said Liu, the Beijing mother. "Wouldn't they distract students while they are studying?

"What's more unbearable is that some shops mix higher-priced products with those that are priced lower, and parents discover the price disparity only when they are about to pay.

"In addition, many items have strong fragrances and bright colors. They are very appealing to children, but I'm reluctant to buy them, considering that my 10-year-old daughter might chew on the pencils while studying. I'm concerned about whether such products are safe," the company added.

In the face of an increasingly competitive market, the frequency of surging prices and unapproved products has also attracted the attention of regulatory authorities.

Last year, the China Consumers Association warned parents about toy-like items with different shapes and decorations, and brightly colored and scented stationery.

In August, the Beijing Consumer Association issued a reminder for parents. It called for making sensible choices when buying stationery instead of just competing to buy the fanciest items. It also urged caution in purchasing stationery-related items with toys that have shapes and decorations that could present a hazard.

Also in August, Beijing's bureau for market regulation issued a letter of reminder and warning on prices at stationery businesses. It said prices should be labeled clearly and accurately to help avoid mixing of items of different prices, which can confuse consumers.

The State Administration for Market Regulation also stipulated in August that businesses shall not sell blind boxes to children under the age of eight.

The Belt and Road Initiative
PEACE AND COOPERATION
The Belt and Road Initiative, reflecting common ideals and the pursuit of fairer, more connected human societies, endeavors to seek new models of international cooperation and inject a new sense of positivity into efforts aimed at promoting world peace and development.

Picturing the invisible

Award-winning photographer, who has mastered the art of the microscope, captures stunning images of an infinitesimal world, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

There are countless microscopic wonders that the naked eye might not be able to see, but they are just as real, or even more so, as our sighted perceptions of the world.

Thanks to photographers who have mastered the art of magnifying and capturing the minuscule, the stunning worlds of the invisible have been presented to public gaze. They range from fluorescent depictions of tissue cells and blood vessels to magnified shots of insects and microscopic organisms.

Zhang Yefei is one of these photographers. His special interest in the microscopic world of the life cycle of insects, including their eggs and incubation, has brought him an international photography accolade that is rare among nonscientists.

The 41-year-old software engineer from Jiangyin, Jiangsu province, managed to use his camera to depict the vivid detail of moth eggs and it won him a top 20 award at the 2022 Nikon Small World Competition in October.

His work shows a tiny exotic tower, which, in actual fact, is a stack of moth eggs magnified 10 times.

"I found these three moth eggs on a very small leaf, and they were strangely superimposed together," Zhang says.

"There were no red markings on the surface of the moth eggs when they were first found. Over the next two days, the inside of the moth's eggs continued to develop, and beautiful red markings appeared," he says.

Zhang was the third Chinese photographer to win an award at the competition, which was launched in 1975. It has been seen as a means to recognize and applaud the efforts of those involved with photography utilizing a light microscope. The competition has become a leading showcase for photomicrographers from a wide array of scientific disciplines. Participants include university professors, practicing scientists, nature enthusiasts, photographers and doctoral students.

Zhang's work stood out among approximately 1,300 entries submitted from 72 countries and regions.

In the past two years, Zhang has focused on photographing the eggs of hundreds of butterfly and moth species, and the prizewinning shot was of moth eggs he found on *Machilus bombycina*, known locally as the "yellow heart" tree.

"One characteristic of moth eggs is that they are usually laid on top of one another in stacks," he says.

Unlike the butterfly eggs that are mostly different in shape and size, moth eggs look similar, so it is impossible to trace them back to their species, unless it's through DNA identification, Zhang says.

He believes that the biggest characteristic of his work is rarity, as very few people tend to aim their lens at butterfly or moth eggs.

"Looking for eggs is a very difficult thing, and you must be familiar with the plants that their larvae like to eat, before trying to find their eggs on the leaves of those plants," Zhang says. "It needs a lot of experience and knowledge accumulation."

He usually takes a magnifying glass during his trips to the wilderness, searching the leaves for the eggs that are often less than a millimeter in width, like Sherlock Holmes looking for clues.

"It is as tiny as the tip of a needle, and you can barely tell what color or characteristics it has with the naked eye," Zhang says.

Yet, a whole new world unfolds under the microscope.

After finding the eggs, Zhang will take them home along with the leaves, and start the process of photographing them in the makeshift studio he has set up at home.

Quite different from conventional photography, enthusiasts like Zhang use a microscope as a lens to capture every single 1 mm egg.

Moreover, Zhang had to custom-make certain equipment, such as a tube lens and diffuser caps that are not readily available on the retail market.

"The technical parameters can be found online, but you have to buy the parts and put them together yourself," Zhang says.

Even when everything is in place, he can only capture a small part of the egg using the equipment setup he has.

"If you look at one photo alone, you will see that only a small area (of the egg) is in sharp focus and the rest of it is blurred, so microphotography requires a large number of photos to be stacked together to produce a full picture of the object," Zhang explains.

It normally takes 500 to 1,000 photos for Zhang to fully present an egg, due to the continuous changes in position of the depth of field.

Then, through computer technology, these photos are combined in a way where all clear parts are put in the right place.

"I once used more than 1,700 images to synthesize a photo, with each image being about 100 megabytes. The computer had some difficulty processing them," he recalls.

Later, he began using special stacking software to improve the efficiency of his work.

The photography process also presents other challenges.

If one photo takes four seconds to take, 1,000 photos will need 4,000 seconds. And that does not include all the preparatory intervals.

That is a long enough period of time for a leaf to deform due to various factors, such as evaporation.

"It is not discernible to the naked eye, but will be magnified under the microscope to make photo synchronization difficult," Zhang says.

Ingeniously, he found a way to use a pin to secure the leaf to minimize the amount of deformation.

Likewise, an actual heartbeat can cause minor shakes big enough to ruin the pictures.

"We may feel that objects like a table are very smooth and solid, but in fact, they are prone to subtle changes with any movement in the room," Zhang says.

He will push the table against the wall to steady it, and air conditioning has to be shut off during shooting.

"I also ask my daughter not to walk around in her room for a while," he says.

On average, it takes him about six hours to finish a single piece, with the longest one taking 21 hours.

While he takes photos of the eggs, he also looks them up in research books and even compares academic descriptions against his observations to make sure they are consistent.

"After all, due to technical limits, researchers from the past might miss some details at the microscopic level," Zhang explains.

Along with the challenges come surprises.

As Zhang uses LED lights to illuminate the pictures, the temperature can accelerate the incubation of the eggs, which enables him to observe the full process from the larva shedding its skin, to its pupation and eventual transformation into a butterfly.

"Every point is worth being photographed and it is proof of how the infinitesimal can be of infinite greatness," Zhang says.

The microscopic world piqued Zhang's interest in 2020, when he was amazed by a friend who has focused on taking photos of butterflies and their eggs for more than two decades.

"I was amazed by them. They were so colorful and beautiful," he says.

He started spending his spare time learning how to identify and find them.

To date, Zhang has framed the images of eggs from hundreds of species of butterflies.

"Some look like corn, some resemble cucumber or blue lotus flowers, while others have 'thorns,'" he says, adding that he feels proud that people appreciate his work as being rare and revealing.

He admits that the work takes a good deal of time and energy, but his family has been supportive.

Yuan Ji, also a photomicrographer, has been studying the trade with Zhang for years.

"Microscopic photography is more technical than the common understanding of photography," Yuan says.

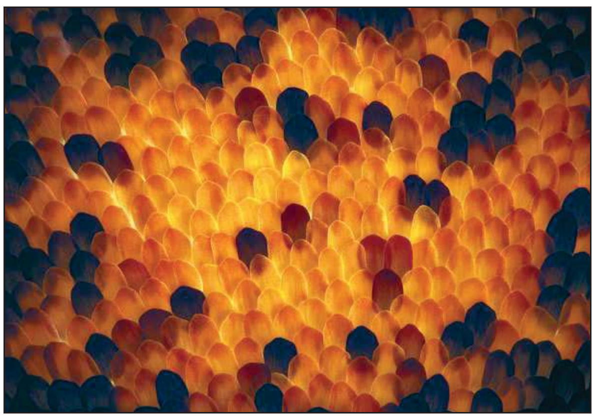
"In addition to visible light, infrared and ultraviolet light will be applied for imaging, which usually requires the use of scientific equipment."

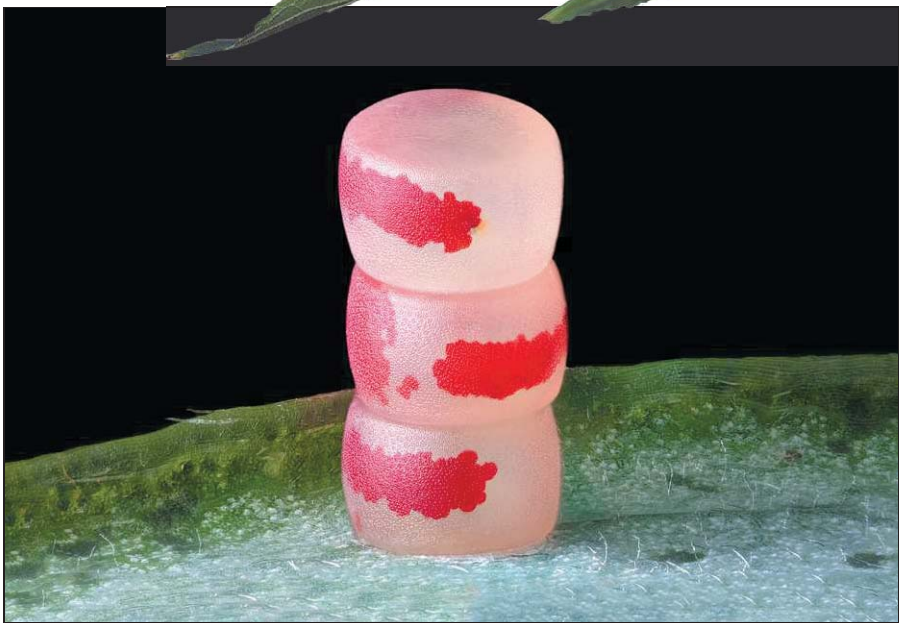
At the moment, photomicrography is mostly confined to scientific studies and only about 100 people in China are engaged in it as an interest, according to Yuan.

For Zhang, winning the international prize only fuels his enthusiasm to continue his exploration of the invisible world.

"I'll try and find more interesting aspects of the microscopic world and bring them to light," Zhang says.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn





"Looking for eggs is a very difficult thing, and you must be familiar with the plants that their larvae like to eat, before trying to find their eggs on the leaves of those plants. It needs a lot of experience and knowledge accumulation."

Zhang Yefei, photographer

1,300 submissions

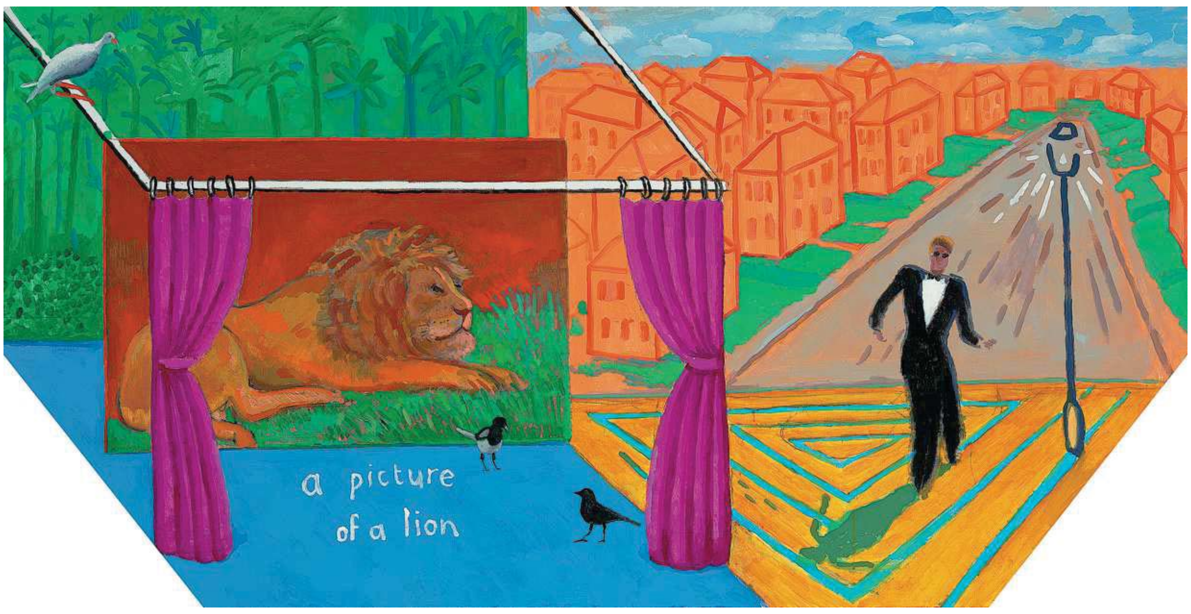
the number of entries from 72 countries and regions at the 2022 Nikon Small World Competition in October

Top: Zhang Yefei's prizewinning photo of three stacked moth eggs, which won a top 20 award at the 2022 Nikon Small World Competition.

Left from top: Butterfly scales, moth eggs and the life cycle of those insects have been brought to light by Zhang through the art of photomicrography.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFESHANGHAI



A double celebration

The Long Museum marks a decade in business with not one but two exhibitions, featuring masterpieces from around the world, **Zhang Kun** reports.

The Long Museum in Shanghai is celebrating its 10th birthday with two exhibitions on the West Bund: *Being in the World*, which features portraits, and *Multiple Sights*, which focuses on abstract art.

The two exhibitions are showcasing more than 260 sets of artworks that present an overview of modern and contemporary art around the world and start a dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures.

On the opening of both shows on Nov 13, the founders of the private museum, Liu Yiqian and his wife, Wang Wei, spoke about their journey over the past 10 years.

The Long Museum first opened in Pudong New Area on Dec 18, 2012, before expanding to the West Bund space in Xuhui district on March 28, 2014. Two years later, a third branch of the museum opened in Chongqing city in southwestern China. Over the past decade, the institution has held about 200 large-scale exhibitions that welcomed more than 30 million visitors from home and abroad.

"In all these exhibitions, the Long Museum has been dedicated to the advocacy of traditional Chinese culture, promotion of Chinese contemporary art, and furthering cultural communication between China and the West," Liu says at the opening.

"We were named a patriotism educational center by Pudong New Area, the Lifelong Learning Experience Center by Xuhui district, an outstanding institution for volunteers' training, 'museum of the year', and most popular location for social media users in China," Wang says.

"All the honors have greatly encouraged me and my husband, and helped the Long Museum have healthy and sustainable growth."

Wang notes that the museum has become a recognized member of the global community of museums and some renowned galleries would give the Long Museum priority to showcase its rare and precious artworks.

"Ten years ago, we didn't know how a museum should be operated. Learning from State-owned institutions didn't work for us, and eventually we found our way by establishing a corporate-style system to serve public interest and fulfill our social responsibilities," Liu says.

"We didn't have any grand goal to begin with, and we simply went about things with hard work. One day when we are old, I hope the younger generations will adopt the same approach and go on to bring fine art from China and the West together to forge more cultural communications and keep the museum pure and simple as it is."

He points out that the museum's audience demographics have gradually changed over the last 10 years, noting that at the beginning most visitors to the Long Museum were mainly professional art lovers. In the past three to five years, however, more young people could be found in the museum premises.

"Sometimes, I would even hear them talk about the artworks in the exhibition hall, and I would join their discussions," he says.

Liu and Wang are both dedicated art collectors — the man is passionate about classical Chinese art while Wang is more focused on modern and contemporary art from across the globe. Among the exhibits at the two ongoing shows are some major artworks that have appeared at global art fairs and auction events over the past decade.

One such work is *Young Man With a Flower Behind His Ear*, among the first paintings French artist Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) completed after arriving in Tahiti in 1891. The painting was originally in the collection of French modern master Henri Matisse (1869-1954).

The museum has a track record of astute collections. In its collection, but not as part of the exhibition, is *Nu Couche* (*Reclining Nude*) by Italian painter Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), which it purchased for $170.4 million in 2015, making it the second-most expensive artwork ever sold at an auction.

However, Modigliani's *Portrait of Paulette Jourdain*, which was created in 1919, is on show.

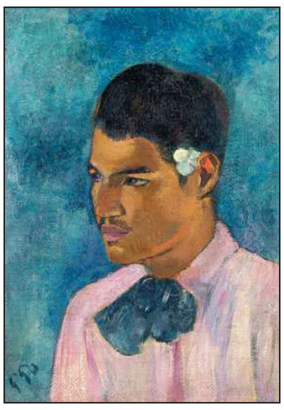
Iwona Blazwick, the curator of *Being in the World*, describes the exhibition as a response to people's yearnings for social encounters. For this exhibition, she chose more than 140 artworks from the museum's collection, ranging from collage to hyperrealism that reflect major movements in modern and contemporary art. She then designed a journey spanning four sections for visitors.

The first section focuses on the single figure, on artists' self-portraits and the relation between the artist and the model. The second captures the dynamics of families, friends and lovers. The third features depictions of groups that may be strangers or colleagues, workers or revelers. The fourth takes visitors into the realm of abstraction where artists use color, light and form to generate sensory environments, and is an invitation for people to "move from looking at the body from outside, to occupy the body from inside, in order to encounter the material reality", writes Blazwick.

The second exhibition, *Multiple Sights*, was curated by Wang herself.

The showcase begins with *Rhymes of Peking Opera*, a piece created in 1950 by Wu Dayu (1903-88), a representative artist of modern Chinese abstract painting, and offers visitors the chance to appreciate abstract artworks from different periods, countries, genres and forms.

Contact the writer at zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn



Top: *A Picture of a Lion* by British painter David Hockney in 2017. **Above:** *Portrait of Paulette Jourdain* is a 1919 oil painting by Italian painter Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920). **Above right:** *Young Man With a Flower Behind his Ear* was completed by French artist Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) after arriving in Tahiti in 1891. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

IF YOU GO

Being in the World **and** ***Multiple Sights***
10 am-5:30 pm, Tuesday-Sunday, Nov 13 to Feb 5.
Long Museum West Bund, 3398 Longteng Avenue, Xuhui district, Shanghai.

Book fair ends after successful return

By ZHANG KUN in Shanghai

The 2022 Shanghai Book Fair took place at the Shanghai Exhibition Center from Nov 18 to 22, when some 120 publishers presented more than 20,000 books and about 100 reading activities were held online and on-site.

The book fair has taken place annually since its launch in 2004, except for 2021, when the event was canceled because of COVID-19.

The festival was delayed for three months this year due to the ongoing pandemic.

"People tell me that every year when the Shanghai Book Fair opens, they feel as if they are hearing alarm clocks ringing, reminding them about the importance and benefits of reading," says Xu Jiong, head of the municipal bureau for press and publication.

"Reading has taken many new forms today, but even so, every August people in Shanghai still look forward to the book fair."

The annual celebration of reading has become the city's most anticipated event for publishers and readers alike. Since the pandemic, many events have been held online, but face-to-face communication has nevertheless been irreplaceable, Xu adds.

Kan Ninghui, president of the Shanghai Century Publishing Group, says although this year's book fair was smaller in scale, the event's core value — promoting good books and quality publication — remained uncompromised.

Kan says he was happy to see publishers and video bloggers livestreaming almost all the events during the 2022 fair. "Such interaction between online events and on-site participation has largely expanded the space of the Shanghai Book Fair," he says.

"I hope that in the future, we can explore new ways to communicate with readers, and make the Shanghai Book Fair an effective platform for promoting reading and publishing."

Cui Junyou, deputy director of the Shanghai bureau of China Publishing Group, has attended the fair since 2008. China Publishing Group consists of 23 publishing houses, all based in Beijing. They brought 3,000 new titles and held 13 activities at the fair this year.

On Tuesday, before the fair closed at 9 pm, 31-year-old Shi Weixin was given a certificate for being the last person to enter the fair. He also received an invitation to be the first visitor to the fair next year.

"My office is just off Yan'an Road, so every year I hop on a bus after work and take a stroll through the book fair," Shi, who bought a series of books about new scientific discoveries, told local media.

"These books are quite heavy, so I had them delivered straight to my home," he says, adding that people can always find some "new discoveries" at the fair.

Ballet production sees the light

By ZHANG KUN in Shanghai

Shanghai Ballet premiered an original production *Follow the Light* at the Shanghai International Dance Center on Sunday.

The 45-minute production tells the story of a young man's pursuit of light — how he follows and spreads it and eventually becomes part of "the light".

Wu Husheng, the leading male dancer of Shanghai Ballet and its new deputy director, says the production is largely inspired by the music of Ludwig van Beethoven and Claude Debussy.

To create a dialogue between dance and music, Wu has rearranged the third movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* and Debussy's *Clair de lune* (*Moonlight*), giving his choreography a smooth flow with enriched layers.

Wu says the creative integration of dance and music is key to the performance.

"As dancers we have to rely on our body language rather than any other tools to tell a good story and touch the audience," he says.

He also credits Xin Lili, the company's director, for keeping faith in him throughout the years. This is the fifth choreographed project by Wu, who received his first choreography assignment from Xin in 2017.

"At that time, she (Xin) seemed to be the only person in the world who believed that I had the potential to become a choreographer," Wu says.

On June 5, Shanghai Ballet's livestreaming of the rehearsal for *Follow the Light* was watched by what Xin describes as an unexpected crowd of 410,000 viewers.

"Audiences participated in the creative process of our new production in this new way, and we felt greatly encouraged," Xin says. "This is our production of the year, and we had to overcome many difficulties during the creative process."

Among the challenges, she explains, was having to face several weeks of COVID-19 lockdown in the city earlier this year as seven principal dancers were to prepare for the ballet. Many internationally acclaimed choreographers have in recent years collaborated with Shanghai Ballet to create new productions, such as *The Lady of the Camellias*, *Hamlet* and *Echoes of Eternity*.

However, the pandemic has made it difficult to have such collaborations now, and that has meant the company has had to create its own projects.

But this hasn't been an issue as creating original productions has always been the primary mission of Shanghai Ballet, Xin says.

Since it was established in 1979, Shanghai Ballet has created about 180 original productions.

"The repertoire is the core strength of a ballet company, and it is only when we constantly create new projects that we can keep the team fresh and powerful," she says.

"We are now aiming to launch a new project every year."

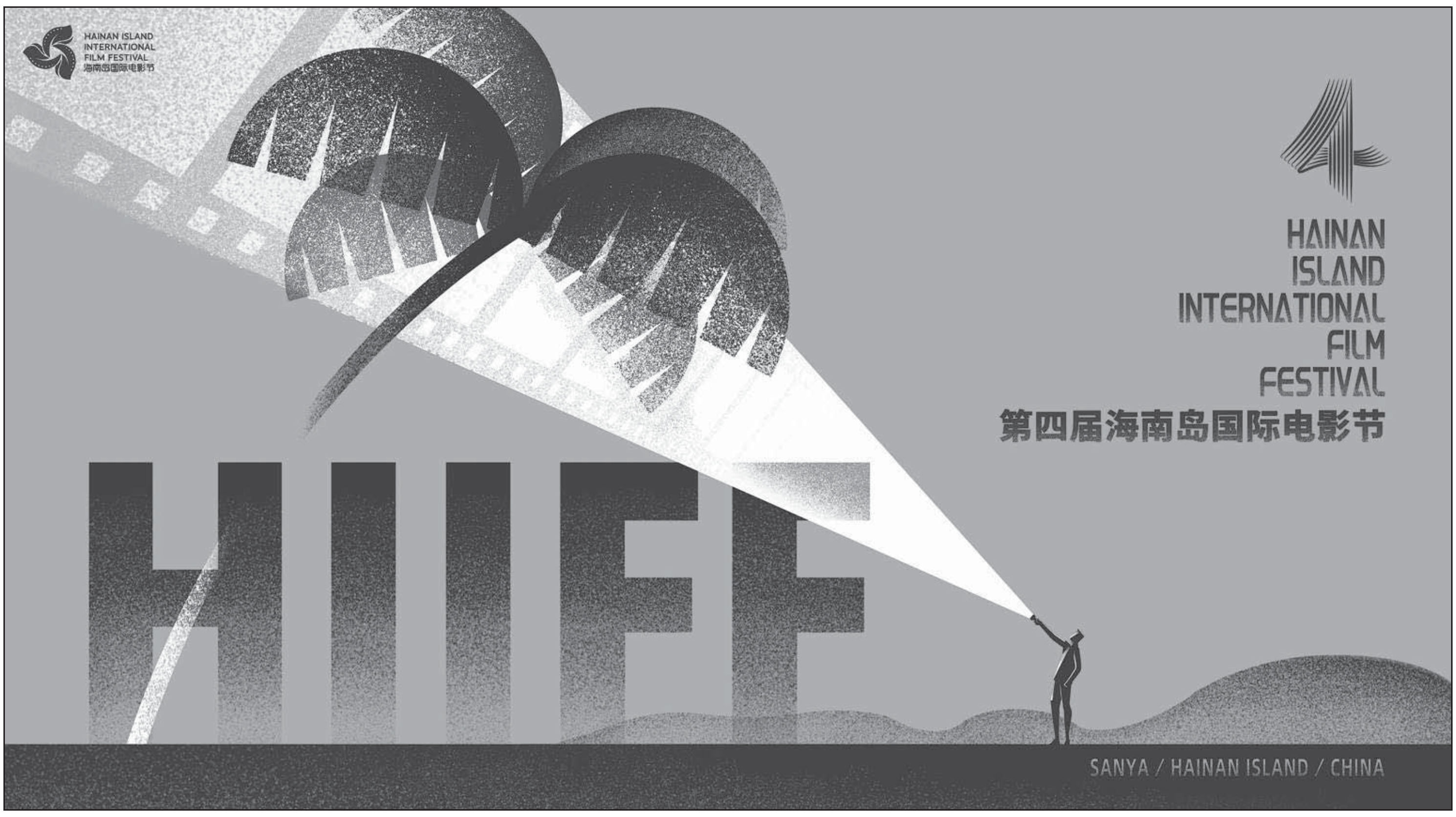
Xin also notes that Shanghai Ballet's steady growth in stature is largely due to its ability to develop its own distinctive style of the dance genre.

Follow the Light is led by Qi Bingxue, the company's prima ballerina, while 19-year-old Xu Jingkun has been assigned the leading male dancer's role.

Xu, the youngest principal dancer at Shanghai Ballet, is a native of Henan province, and studied at the Shanghai Dance School and the Australian Ballet School before joining the company in 2019.

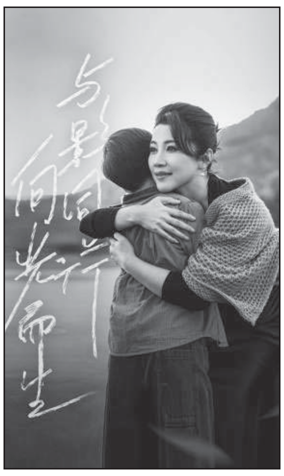
Inspired by the music of Ludwig van Beethoven and Claude Debussy, Shanghai Ballet's original production *Follow the Light* was premiered at the Shanghai International Dance Center on Sunday. It tells the story of a young man's pursuit of light — how he follows and spreads it and eventually becomes part of "the light". PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

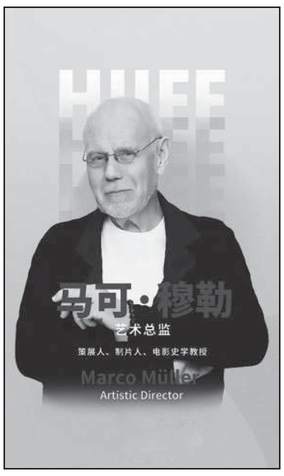
LIFE

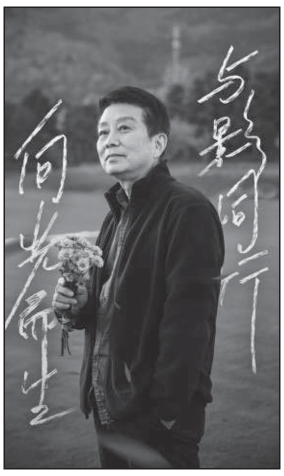


Shining a light on Hainan

Film festival set to illuminate global appeal of island province, **Chen Bowen** reports in Haikou.







Top: The main poster of the 4th Hainan Island International Film Festival features a film reel and Hainan's typical elements such as a coconut tree and beach. **Above:** (From left) Actress Yan Bingyan, filmmaker Marco Muller and director Huang Jianxin are set to participate in the festival that will be held from Dec 3-10 in Sanya. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

When people think of Hainan province, the first image that pops into their heads tends to be that of coconut trees and beaches. That is why they featured in the main poster of the 4th Hainan Island International Film Festival, which will be held in Sanya, Hainan, from Dec 3-10.

In the festival's poster, the coconut tree and beach "are reminiscent of the tropical island's high-quality ecological environment", Wang Dongju, general manager of Hainan Island International Film Festival Co, said at a news conference on Nov 15.

Adopting a bold contrast of yellow and green, it resolves around the theme of "light", which means to "live toward the light and move forward with the shadow".

The white light and a man's silhouette in the poster symbolize movies. And the silhouette alone represents filmmakers who are relentlessly striving forward. In the man's hand, light gradually turns into a film reel and illuminates the coconut tree, "which stands for the integration of the film industry and Hainan that can brighten up the sky and create dreams", Wang explained.

"The poster integrates film with Hainan's typical elements, adopts a minimalist design style and carries on the main visual tone of the previous three film festivals," she added. "With a love of movies and yearning for Hainan, we hope to bring people from all over the world a wonderful journey of light and shadow on the island."

"The HIIFF will make an effort to present Chinese and Hainan characteristics by deeply integrating film, music, technology and other elements, truly making it a festival for global filmmakers, Hainan residents and tourists, as well as an influential cultural event for exchanges and cooperation," said Zhang Jun, head of Hainan's provincial film bureau.

This year's HIIFF Golden Coconut Awards set up three categories, namely feature films, documentary features and short films. Among them, a group of newcomers will premiere in the feature film category, and more young directors are choosing the festival to make their debut. They pay attention to various themes with diversified perspectives.

In the category of short films, more Chinese creators living overseas join the competition and present their views on global topics. Some university students from across the world opt to express themselves through the creative medium of short films.

This year's Golden Coconut Awards collect outstanding films produced after Aug 15, 2021, from around the world. Selection started in July and ended in September. A total of 3,761 films from 116 countries and regions have been submitted. Among them, 3,050 films were registered from outside China, accounting for 81.1 percent of the total. In the competition unit, 12 feature films, eight documentary features and 12 short films are expected to be shortlisted.

The jury committee of the Golden Coconut Awards will select the best film, best director, the jury award, best actor, best actress, best screenwriter, best documentary feature and best short film, among other awards from the lists of finalists.

This year, the HIIFF has invited Marco Muller, an internationally renowned curator, film historian, critic and film producer, to serve as the film festival's artistic director, and join the curatorial team of seven international film selection art consultants to choose the highest-quality films for the festival.

Muller has served as the artistic director of several international film festivals, including the Venice International Film Festival in Italy. The Italian filmmaker has also helped acclaimed Chinese directors, such as Zhang Yimou, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Jia Zhangke and Chen Kaige, get selected for international film festivals, making an important contribution to the international profile of Chinese films.

The much-anticipated event will also hold public screenings across the island. Some 80 to 100 films are expected to be exhibited and organized across the six categories of "gala, fest best, Asian new directors, panorama, new horizons and classics".

"It aims to carry on the uniqueness and openness of Hainan's screenings, enhance the public's participation, and attract more people to learn about the HIIFF," said Zhang.

"A notable feature of the HIIFF is its internationalization," said Xia Fei, chairman of the Hainan Federation of Literary and Art Circles. "We have invited many internationally renowned filmmakers to help raise the international profile of Chinese films. The confirmation rate of international guest invitations could reach 95 percent. With the film festival, we also hope to enhance the cultural and global influence of Hainan Free Trade Port."

"The HIIFF is one of the leading projects for Hainan to build a free trade port with Chinese characteristics," said Zhou Chunhua, head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Sanya Municipal Committee. "The 4th HIIFF is an international large-scale cultural event and an important platform to showcase the construction achievements of Hainan Free Trade Port, as well as the image of Hainan and Sanya."

"By holding this event, we hope to display Hainan's unique geographical and cultural advantages, attract more production teams to come and make movies in Hainan, and boost the local tourism and cultural sectors, as well as other related industries," said Wang. "At the same time, we have further enhanced the film festival to create an international cultural exchange platform."

Contact the writer at chenbowen@chinadaily.com.cn

China has woken up to demand for 'sleep assistants'

CHONGQING — Insomnia has become a nightmare for many Chinese people, so a new occupation called "sleeping assistant" has sprung up to help the unfortunate sleepless masses enjoy a good night's slumber.

In the daytime, Shen Ye, 23, has a white-collar job as an administrative staff member in a State-owned enterprise. But at night, he serves as a "sleeping assistant" that receives orders from an online shop.

Having charged clients hundreds of yuan an hour, Shen shoulders an important task that pillows, aromatic products and medicines would fail to fulfill — to make his clients fall asleep as soon as possible.

"I have been doing this job for over two years to earn some spare money," says Shen. He says the market demand is huge and he "never lacks clients".

Insomnia has plagued more than 300 million people in China, according to a report released by the Chinese Sleep Research Society in 2021.

Shen's secret is his broadcaster-style voice, sensitivity and experiences. He works mainly by telling stories to customers and chatting with them via voice calls.

According to Shen, it is not easy to be recruited as a "sleeping assistant" by the online shop. It requires a sweet voice, a good-looking appearance, a bachelor's degree, and some talent.

The online shop categorizes "sleeping assistants" into different levels based on comprehensive evaluations. Thus, the price of a one-hour voice call can vary from 50 yuan ($7) to 310 yuan.

For 18-year-old Su Xiao, another "sleeping assistant", things are slightly different.

"I did this purely out of boredom and curiosity," says Su. She only charged 15 yuan per night. Her clients are mostly young people who, plagued by work or life stress, find it very difficult to fall asleep.

Su adds that one of her clients, who used to stay awake until 3 am, now can fall asleep by midnight after purchasing her service for four consecutive days. Her service content is similar to Shen's, including chatting and reading stories.

"Nowadays, the excessive competition at work can put people under so much strain, especially young people, that they can't fall asleep. The 'sleeping assistants' can help ease their loneliness and anxiety," says Jiang Chenggang, director of the sleep and psychology department at the Chongqing Health Center for Women and Children.

Jiang adds that this new occupation also reflects how the internet has changed the way people deal with insomnia. Now, more targeted services are on offer, such as sleep monitoring applications, intelligent beds, and memory foam pillows.

Data released by the market research firm iiMedia Research shows that the overall market size of the country's "sleep economy" has grown from about 262 billion yuan in 2016 to approximately 378 billion yuan in 2020, and is expected to reach 1 trillion yuan by 2030.

XINHUA

Balancing prosperity and authenticity in ethnic tourism

Conrad Anthony
Second Thoughts

In 2021, President Xi Jinping toured remote rural areas of Guizhou province, celebrating the eradication of absolute poverty in the last nine districts of the country marked by the government as underdeveloped. In the Miao ethnic group village of Huawu, Xi commended the villagers' creative repackaging of traditional Miao embroidery techniques in order to promote rural vitalization.

Xi's tour was part of a wider effort to develop the region by leveraging its unique ethnic culture. Other cultural commodities the Miao are looking to capitalize on include: folk dances such as *shuigu*, which is performed in water; batik, a patterned cloth used in traditional garments, produced by dyeing with indigo and dipping in beeswax; performances with *lusheng*, a reed pipe; silverwork, which the Miao originally perfected to produce ceremonial ornaments; and a variety of other cultural displays and artisanal handicrafts, many of which originally served a symbolic, ritual function.

This is combined with a push to build afresh, or repurpose family properties, to increase the number of inns and restaurants in ethnic villages, where stilt houses, snaking, steep-shored rivers and towering peaks make for breathtaking surroundings.

These efforts have been massively successful in repurposing traditional culture in order to survive in the commercialized landscape of the reform and opening-up era. In 2021, 644 million tourists, mostly domestic, visited Guizhou, generating $98 billion in income. The per capita GDP for rural residents has increased 2.7 times from 2012-21, according to the provincial government, and 9.23 million residents have been lifted out of poverty. In Huawu, the Miao village visited by Xi, income rose even more sharply, from 2,450 yuan ($347) in 2012 to a projected 28,000 yuan this year.

The economic benefit of these projects is clear. However, the jury is still out on the extent of the sociocultural change they have produced. A study by Wang Xiaoyan, an anthropologist at the Center for Studies of Education and Psychology of Ethnic Minorities in Southwest China, is illustrative. His research into a Miao village in Congjiang county, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, shows that traditional culture is still very much alive, just not in the places one might think.

The object of his study was one of the first villages to be earmarked by the provincial government for tourism development in 1999. The villagers were organized into troupes and performed a repertoire of activities derived from traditional cultural elements. Through economic integration and increased income, they were able to purchase more varied goods, and developed what he termed "commodity consciousness". However, external aspects of their culture, like costume, hairstyles, songs, dances and musical instruments, were subsumed into the tourist industry and, in some cases, discarded as an organic part of life; they remained only to serve as entertainment for visitors.

He was, however, able to identify many yet-living aspects of the culture, especially in the intimate spheres of life that are most difficult for the market to penetrate. Courtship ritual, kinship practices, marriage and burial ceremonies, tree worship, the role of practitioners of magic in religious rite — all were still in use, though sometimes in modified form, catering to ongoing social necessity.

There is a good argument to be made that bringing the benefits of China's rapid growth to isolated communities that have historically been left behind trumps the maintenance of cultural authenticity. But it begs the question, how much connection do these tourist activities really have to the past, and how much are they dictated by the logic of contemporary market economics?

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SPORTS

FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

Unconvincing Belgium spoils Canada's return

North American side left to rue missed chances after brave effort

Belgium's Michy Batshuayi celebrates scoring the goal that earned a 1-0 victory over Canada at the FIFA World Cup in Al Rayyan, Qatar, on Wednesday. World No 2 Belgium was relieved to escape with the win after being outplayed at times by the Canadians. AFP

A Canada supporter (left) and Belgium fan watch the action during Wednesday's World Cup Group F match between the countries at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium. A large portion of the 40,432-strong crowd supported Canada. AFP

Kevin De Bruyne threw his hands up in disgust as another pass went astray. Eden Hazard was easily knocked off the ball. Michy Batshuayi was hauled off by his angry coach after a lazy flick to no one at all.

Belgium didn't live up to the hype of being the second-ranked team despite starting the World Cup with a 1-0 victory over Canada on Wednesday in Al Rayyan, Qatar.

Thibaut Courtois saved an early penalty and Batshuayi scored the only goal at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium to spoil the North American team's return to the tournament after 36 years.

Aside from the result, there was little for the Belgians to celebrate, with De Bruyne — one of the world's best players — mocking the decision to name him player of the match.

"No, I don't think I played a great game," a miserable-looking De Bruyne said after being told of his award. "I don't know why I got the trophy — maybe it's because of my name."

Belgium's aging team was outplayed at times by Canada, which has yet to collect a point or even score a goal in four World Cup matches — including the three games from its debut in 1986.

This should have been the game the Canadians broke that run. Alphonso Davies, the star of Canada's team, squandered the best chance when his penalty was saved by Courtois, one of 21 shots taken compared to Belgium's nine.

"They showed tonight they do belong here," Canada coach John Herdman said of his players.

One moment of class in the 44th minute wound up deciding the game. It wasn't from a trademark De Bruyne through-balls or a mazy Hazard dribble, but instead a simple long ball over the top of Canada's defense by centerback Toby Alderweireld.

It split the defense and Batshuayi ran through, letting the ball bounce twice before guiding a left-footed finish into the far corner.

"Delighted that, without being ourselves, we won the game," Belgium coach Roberto Martinez said.

Martinez said it was his team's worst performance on a technical level since he took charge more than six years ago.

"But was it the worst game?" he added. "No. Because it's a win."

There were six players in their 30s in Belgium's starting lineup, four of them having accrued more than 100 international appearances. Courtois and De Bruyne might reach three figures at this World Cup, in what looks like being a last hurrah for this group of players often described as a "golden generation".

The absence of Romelu Lukaku — a prolific scorer and big presence up front — is a huge blow to Martinez, with Batshuayi failing to impress as his backup aside from his well-taken goal.

Lukaku, who has a left thigh injury, could potentially miss the entire group stage.

With De Bruyne's passing unusually poor, all the best moves came from a mobile and attacking Canada team in front of its loud, Maple Leaf-waving fans.

Davies stood out with his driving runs from leftback but ruined his performance with his failure from the spot. Herdman had no complaints about Davies taking the kick, even though Jonathan David usually takes them for French club Lille.

"It's a big moment for any player. You are carrying the weight of a nation," Herdman said. "When you have an $85-million player, let him pick the ball up and take it."

Canada had 14 shots in the first half alone, the most by a team at the World Cup without scoring in 16 years.

Davies did not speak with media after the game.

"He's our star player. He's one of the best players in the world. He'll move on and he'll have another chance and he'll bury it," midfielder Jonathan Osorio said. "There was also the best goalkeeper in the world in net he had to put it past."

Courtois class

Courtois had studied video of Davies.

"He shot twice that side, so that's why I decided to go that way," Courtois said.

> "Times are changing in this country for this sport… It's not a close trip from Canada to get here (Qatar). It shows you how much support we have, how much the fans love football, how much people love football in Canada. This is a change in the history of this sport in this country."
>
> **John Herdman,** Canada coach

A large part of the crowd of 40,432 in the Arabian desert stadium supported Canada.

Many waved the Maple Leaf and proudly sang *O Canada* before the match.

"Goosebumps," Osorio said. "Times are changing in this country for this sport. I was a little bit surprised. It's not a close trip from Canada to get here. It shows you how much support we have, how much the fans love football, how much people love football in Canada. This is a change in the history of this sport in this country. It felt like a home game. And I think Belgium felt like an away game."

Players brought along the sword they carried around Central America and the Caribbean during qualifying, which features a Latin inscription: *Nihil timendum est* (Fear nothing).

Retired Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield spoke with the team before the match.

Atiba Hutchinson, at 39, became the oldest non-goalkeeper to start a World Cup match.

Even though Canada dropped to 0-4 in the World Cup, players felt proud and felt they had momentum going into Sunday's game against Croatia, the losing finalist in the 2018 World Cup. Croatia opened with a 0-0 draw against Morocco.

"They walk away proud, I'm sure, proud of the feeling that we're a football nation," Herdman said. "We came into that game with a couple of goals. The first goal was to play fearlessly, and the second goal was to entertain. We had some other goals, which were to create some firsts, but we weren't quite up to those moments."

He gathered players on the field after the final whistle.

"I was really passionate in the circle," Herdman said, recounting what he told them. "I thought that was a big step for this country. We deserve to be here."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Morocco seizes the moment to continue Arab excellence

Croatia's Luka Modric reacts after being tackled during his team's 0-0 draw with Morocco at the FIFA World Cup in Al Khor, Qatar, on Wednesday. REUTERS

AL KHOR, Qatar — Another surprisingly strong performance by an Arab country at the World Cup in Qatar stifled the threat of Luka Modric and held 2018 finalist Croatia to a 0-0 draw.

Morocco's resilient performance Wednesday came 24 hours after Saudi Arabia sparked the first World Cup in the Middle East into life by beating Lionel Messi's Argentina in one of the biggest upsets in the tournament's history.

Tunisia followed that up with a scoreless draw against Denmark, a semifinalist at last year's European championship.

Morocco managed to do enough to rein in Croatia captain Modric, who was still his team's best player in its Group F opener and had one of the best chances when his shot just rose over the crossbar in the first half. Dejan Lovren got a shot off at a corner in the second half and Sofyan Amrabat cleared off the line for Morocco to preserve the draw.

"It was a difficult game, especially in the first 15 minutes," Modric said. He said Croatia "missed something up front".

Modric didn't have nearly the same kind of impact he had throughout the last World Cup in Russia when he led Croatia to its first final before losing to France.

That was largely down to Morocco, who harassed and harried the Croatians at every turn, buoyed by their red-shirted fans, who outnumbered and made much more noise than the Croatian supporters.

"They played their hearts out. I congratulate them on that," said Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic. "They had a really energetic game and they had great support."

The 37-year-old Modric is playing in his fourth and what's expected to be his final World Cup, where he's looking to add an international title to his trophy-laden career with Real Madrid.

He was voted the best player at the World Cup four years ago to widespread acclaim. When he was then announced as player of the match on Wednesday, it was greeted by an outburst of boos from Morocco fans who had chanted and whirled scarves as they jumped up and down in the final minutes at Al Bayt Stadium.

Paris Saint-Germain defender Achraf Hakimi had the best chance for Morocco with a thumping second-half shot punched away with both fists by goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic.

The result was a major confidence-booster for Morocco and coach Walid Regragui, who was only hired at the end of August — his first international coaching job — and had less than three months to prepare the team for Qatar.

"We were playing against the runner-up for the last World Cup," Regragui said. "I'm so proud of the boys. I'm proud of the men."

> "We haven't come here just to compete. On the basis of our Russian experience we have ambitions to do the same or even better. But even before that tournament we said let's first set a primary objective of getting past the group stage."
>
> **Luka Modric,** Croatia midfielder

More than Modric

As brilliant as he is, Modric is closer to 40 than 30 now and will need more help from his team if Croatia is going to get to another World Cup final. Forwards Ivan Perisic and Nikola Vlasic weren't the threats they were expected to be against Morocco and Vlasic went off injured in the second half.

"We haven't come here just to compete," Modric said. "On the basis of our Russian experience we have ambitions to do the same or even better. But even before that tournament we said let's first set a primary objective of getting past the group stage."

Rookie coach

There were serious concerns that Regragui's lack of international experience and time to prepare the Morocco team would result in another early exit. Morocco has only got past the group stage once at a World Cup, back in 1986. But Regragui's team was well-organized, even if Chelsea's Hakim Ziyech didn't play as well as expected on the right wing.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

SPORTS

FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

Golden boy Gavi arrives in style

Teenager tipped for global stardom after emulating Pele as seven-goal Spain sounds warning to rivals

Gavi's historic 74th-minute strike hits the net for Spain. AFP

Spain midfielder Gavi (left) celebrates scoring his team's fifth goal with Alejandro Balde during Wednesday's 7-0 World Cup Group E win over Costa Rica at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha. AFP

Gavi chest-bumps with Aymeric Laporte after scoring. AFP

Spain's Marco Asensio celebrates scoring with Dani Olmo. REUTERS

Spain coach Luis Enrique celebrates Ferran Torres' goal in his team's 7-0 rout of Costa Rica on Wednesday. REUTERS

DOHA — Spain laid down the gauntlet to its World Cup rivals in a scintillating 7-0 annihilation of Costa Rica on Wednesday, with the match also announcing the arrival of hotly tipped teen talent Gavi on the global stage.

At 18 years and 110 days, Gavi became the youngest World Cup scorer since Pele, in 1958, and the third youngest in the tournament's history when he smashed in a first-time finish from Alvaro Morata's cross that crashed in off the inside of the post.

"It's the best of my dreams, I never imagined this," said Gavi. "I'm delighted to be achieving this."

It capped a man-of-the-match display from the Barcelona youth product who linked brilliantly in midfield with fellow Camp Nou-based teenager Pedri, 19.

And Spain head coach Luis Enrique is sure he has on his hands a player who will become one of the best in the world.

"He's a unique player, a very different player because ... he's 18 years old but he has the personality of an experienced player," he said.

"We're happy to have him in the team and we think he's going to be one of the stars of world soccer."

And the demanding coach still expects Gavi to improve.

"I hope he will go and play every time better and try to be aggressive with the ball and without the ball," said Luis Enrique, who added that Gavi "needs only a bit of poise and calm at times".

Gavi was the pick of a bunch of supremely gifted young players who contributed to a stunning performance in which Spain did not give up a single corner or shot on goal while dominating possession.

> "He's a unique player, a very different player because ... he's 18 years old but he has the personality of an experienced player. We're happy to have him in the team and we think he's going to be one of the stars of world soccer."
>
> **Luis Enrique,** Spain head coach on Gavi

He linked up particularly well with Pedri, with the pair reminiscent of the legendary partnership between Andres Iniesta and Xavi Hernandez that helped Spain become world champion in 2010.

Pedri provided the pass for Dani Olmo's opening goal.

"I'm very happy to win it and delighted to be MVP. We played a great game, well done everyone," said Gavi.

"Pedri and I are very good friends off the pitch and on the pitch. There is not much to say, he's a spectacular player and it's very easy to play alongside him."

Pass masters

Not long after Japan surprised Germany 2-1 in the other Group E match, Spain's young squad avoided any chance of an upset with Olmo, Marco Asensio and Ferran Torres scoring a goal each in the first half. Torres, Gavi, Carlos Soler and Morata added to the lead in the second half.

In addition to Gavi's mark, Olmo's goal was the 100th at World Cups for La Roja, which became the sixth nation to score more than 100 times in the tournament.

It was the first time Spain scored seven goals in a World Cup match, and the first time a team completed 1,000 passes in a 90-minute game at the tournament.

"Our only goal is to control the game continuously, and to do that you need to have the ball," said Luis Enrique.

With Gavi and Pedri on the team sheet, Spain also became the first European nation with two teenagers in the starting lineup of a World Cup match in 60 years, according to statistics platform Opta.

Gavi and Pedri were among the many youngsters picked by Luis Enrique in a revamped squad in Qatar — the third-youngest team among the 32 nations, after the United States and Ghana.

The young duo helped Spain control the pace of the match from the start at Al Thumama Stadium. The 22-year-old Torres, who is dating the daughter of Luis Enrique, scored his first World Cup goal from the penalty spot in the 31st minute. The others came during the run of play.

"When things go your way like this, soccer becomes wonderful," Luis Enrique said. "We played exceptionally well with and without the ball."

Costa Rica looked overwhelmed throughout the game in its third straight World Cup campaign, failing to even get a single attempt on goal. The team came to Qatar hoping to repeat its surprise run to the quarterfinals in 2014 in Brazil, and avoid a repeat of its winless showing four years ago in Russia.

"We didn't hold on to the possession as we should have done it," Costa Rica coach Luis Fernando Suarez said. "We couldn't complete three or four passes."

Spanish players made it look easy with the ball at their feet, finishing the match with a 74 percent possession rate, according to the FIFA website.

Spain, which didn't get past the last 16 in Russia, is trying to break through with a major title after making it to the final of the Nations League and the semifinals of last year's European Championship. This year the team also qualified for the Final Four of the Nations League for a second straight time. Spain's last major triumph came at Euro 2012, two years after it won its lone World Cup title in South Africa.

Only five countries have scored more goals than Spain at the World Cup — Brazil, Germany, Argentina, Italy and France.

Spain next faces four-time World Cup champion Germany on Sunday in one of the most anticipated matches of the World Cup.

AGENCIES

Tournament's giant-killing minnows keep the magic alive

James Boylan
Extra time

Even for the most committed of armchair fans, fatigue and apathy can set in when the World Cup's "feast of football" sometimes fails to deliver the anticipated excitement levels. Making all those drab 0-0 draws and tedious mismatches worthwhile, however, are the giant-killing upsets that inevitably brighten up each tournament.

There's nothing quite as pleasing as watching a team of swaggering superstars holding their heads in their hands as a motley crew of plucky journeymen rampage around the pitch in wild celebration — unless, of course, your country happens to be on the receiving end.

Such scenes were repeated this week in Qatar when Saudi Arabia stunned Lionel Messi's Argentina before Japan humbled four-time champion Germany — adding to the tournament's rich tradition of mega shocks.

Italy features prominently on that list, having lost to not one but both Koreas. The Azzurri were embarrassed 2-1 by co-host the Republic of Korea in 2002, but it was a truly seismic shock when the Democratic People's Republic of Korea beat the Italians 1-0 in England in 1966. That result was no fluke — the DPRK gave Eusebio's Portugal an almighty scare in the quarterfinals, racing into a 3-0 lead before bowing out 5-3.

There was more ignominy for Italy at the 1994 World Cup in the United States, when the Republic of Ireland stunned a star-studded team that included the likes of Franco Baresi, Paolo Maldini and Roberto Baggio. The Irish had officially been allocated 3,325 tickets for each group match, but when the cameras panned over Giants Stadium, the stands were bathed in a sea of green. An estimated 50,000 Irish fans erupted in celebration when Ray Houghton's 11th-minute winner soared into the net to kick off a Guinness-drenched party in New Jersey — and back home in Ireland for the next week.

Northern Ireland produced an arguably bigger shock in 1982 against host Spain. That was the first tournament with 24 rather than 16 teams and there were concerns that smaller nations would struggle. However, an early second-half goal by Watford striker Gerry Armstrong earned a 1-0 win, which was all the more remarkable considering NI had defender Mal Donaghy sent off with 30 minutes left on the clock.

Nothing, however, compares to 1950, when the US beat England 1-0 in Brazil. Legend has it that when the result was relayed to London, in the days before reliable communications, some newspapers believed it was a typo and that the correct result was 10-0 to England. Context is vital. England was the 3-1 favorite to lift the World Cup, while the US was rated 500-1 and entirely composed of amateurs. They included a postman, a paint-stripper, a dishwasher and a hearse driver. Back in the States, the result was barely noticed. The New York Times gave the famous victory just two paragraphs.

These are just a handful of the jaw-dropping results the tournament has produced through the decades, with other honorable mentions going to Scotland's 3-2 win over the Netherlands' famed 'Total Football' side in 1978, Cameroon's 1-0 win over Diego Maradona's Argentina in 1990, and Senegal's 1-0 victory over world and European champion France in 2002.

Here's hoping the achievements of Saudi Arabia and Japan inspire more giant-slaying heroics in Qatar.

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Germany's Jamal Musiala cannot watch after his team crashed to a shock 2-1 defeat to Japan in their Group E opener at the FIFA World Cup in Doha on Wednesday. REUTERS